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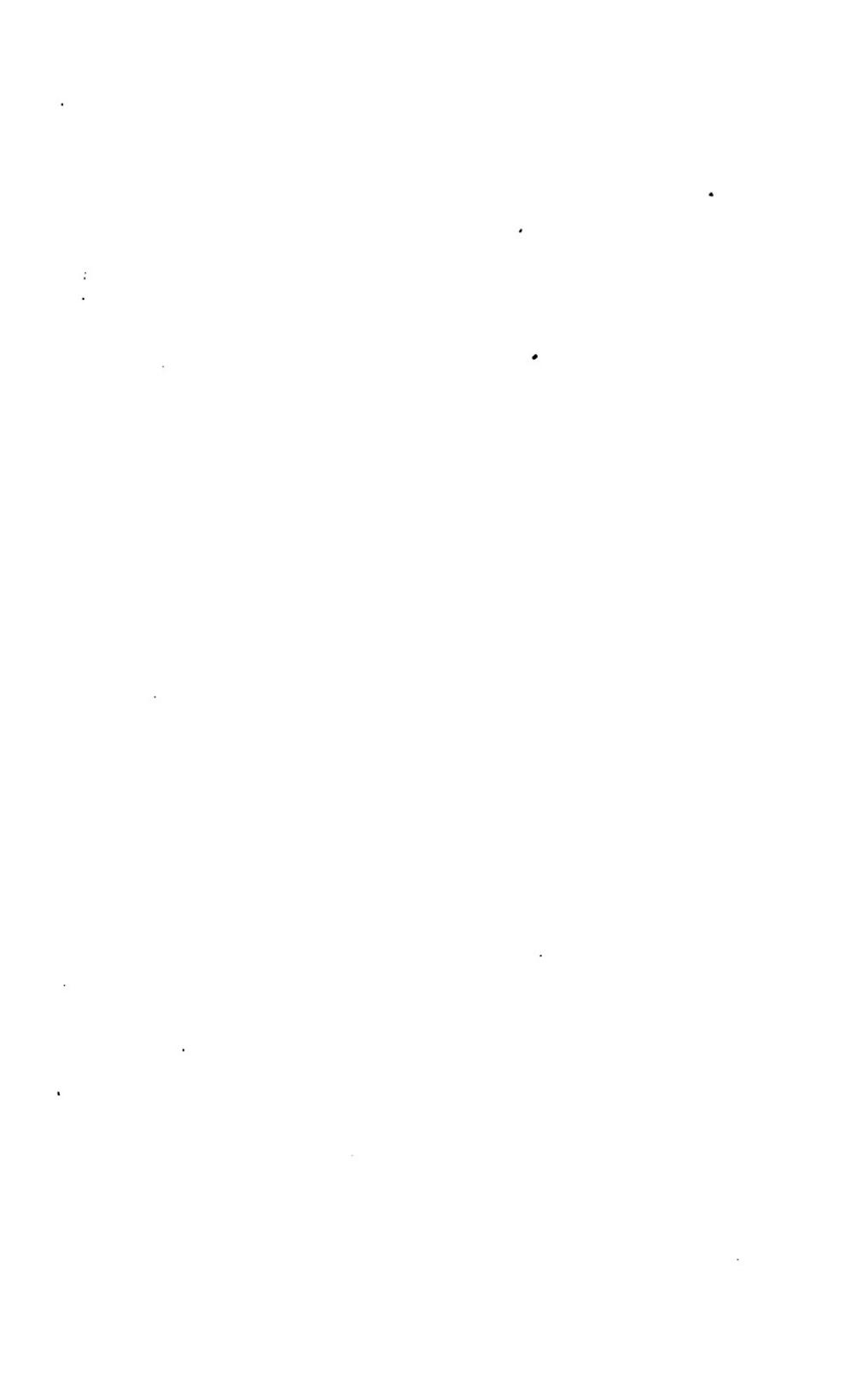


PAUL L. HAWORTH



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"Down they went, amid the screams of the women, on the
final plunge into a foaming caldron."

FRONTISPICE. See page 135

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BY

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CHARLES C. EDWARDS

BOSTON,

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1877.

THE
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BY
PAUL LELAND HAWORTH

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To the Mother
Of the Real Little Barnaby

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THE PATH OF GLORY

CHAPTER I

THE HERALDS

“**A**NOTHER tree across the trace!” announced the youthful horseman in the lead. Without waiting for an answer, he urged his mount to make the leap, then reined aside in the snow upon the river bank until his three companions had cleared the obstruction.

“What think you by this time, major,” he asked the foremost, a bronzed young giant whose face was slightly marred by the marks of smallpox; “will the commandant receive us well and give us a satisfactory answer?”

The major cast a glance up the hemlock ridge ahead at a little company of Indian guides, swarthy Canadians in the uniforms of *troupes de la marine* or colonial regulars, and English borderers in hunting-shirts convoying four or five pack-horses. Satisfied that they were out of ear-shot, he made answer with the deliberation of one accustomed to weigh his words:

“It was in order to discuss such matters privately, Charles, that I asked the three of you to drop behind the rest of the party. As for your question, the devil only knows the answer. Probably the commandant will make us fine speeches and treat us well to outward seeming, but that he will comply with our summons I do not believe. What think you, Christopher?”

“That we shall do well to walk softly and keep our eyes

open even while asleep, sir," replied the man addressed, ducking his head over his horse's neck to avoid the low-swinging limbs of a giant beech. "I fear there are snakes in the grass. Since we left Venango I have watched Mr. La Force and his *parley voos* and have seen much to make me suspicion they are trying to curry favor with our Injuns."

"And think you they have succeeded?" inquired the first speaker, tightening his grasp upon the long rifle that lay across the pommel of his saddle.

"Not with the sachems, Mr. Randolph. Half-King, Jeskakake, and White Thunder are sly old foxes, not to be trapped so easily. But I fear The Hunter is somewhat influenced."

"Nefer you drust a Frenchman, say I!" broke in the fourth horseman, a bulky, middle-aged man, whose sword, pistols, and the cut of his mustache proclaimed him a member of the profession of arms, as clearly as did his accent show that he, or an immediate ancestor, was from the country of dykes and windmills. "Five years I fought dem and dot Maréchal Saxe in Flanders, and vereof I speaks I knows. Dey vill fight, dot I admits, as ve at Fontenoy and Laffeldt to our gost found, put, as my name is Jacob Van Braam, do not drust dem!"

"As they will have nothing to gain by mistreating us, I do not apprehend that we shall be in any particular danger," the major said thoughtfully. "But I do not doubt that Mr. Gist is right in thinking they will do all in their power to win over the sachems. But look sharp, all of you. We'll circumvent them if we can. 'Distrust and caution are the parents of security,' says Poor Richard. Deliver our message we must and will."

"Caution should pe our vatchword," quoth Van Braam, sagely nodding his bullet head. "'Kom ik er vandag niet,

dan kom ik er mogēn — Fair and softly goes far in a day,' says a Tutch broverb. '*Het is gekleid tegen de maan te blaafēn* — It is of no use to park ven you cannot pite,' says another. Put vat is de madder now?"

The four horsemen had come up with the rest of the party, who had halted upon the bank of a little creek, which, swollen by melting snow and recent rains, put a temporary limit to their progress. Fifty yards to their left the stream fell into a river too wide and deep to be fordable, while on their right it was lost to view in the interminable forest, which, with its thick tangle of fallen trees, practically forbade a detour in that direction. The Indian guides had stolidly drawn their tattered blankets closer about them, the officer in charge of the Canadians was chattering and gesticulating violently, and three of the borderers were impotently damning the stream with nothing more effectual than boisterous British oaths. The fourth had leaned his long rifle against a tree, had laid aside his immense and curiously carved powder-horn, and was loosening an axe that was tied on one of the pack-horses.

"That's right, Currin," said the major approvingly. "Cut that leaning basswood so that it will fall across the creek, and we'll pass over as dry-shod as did the Israelites over Jordan."

"Faith, sir, an' it's more than forty years *we'll* be after wanderin' in the wilderness if we let a little strame like that keep us," said the borderer, with a glance at the low-sinking December sun.

He threw off his cap of coonskin with tails attached, and the white chips were soon flying from the doomed tree. The other members of the party, with the exception of the Indians, busied themselves removing the packs and saddles from the horses. Soon the tree crashed down across the stream. Some of the men at once set to work carrying the

b baggage over the bridge thus formed; the others, walking along the tree, led the reluctant horses through the icy water, which, though not quite deep enough to force the animals to swim, came almost to their backs.

"Deuce take your foot-log!" presently cried Randolph. "I'll venture I can cross without it!"

So saying, he remounted, and standing upon his horse's back, forced him to enter the stream. A less skillful rider would inevitably have been precipitated into the yellow flood, but Randolph had followed the fox over the hills and through the green fields and valleys of Virginia. Though for a moment he seemed about to fall, he managed to keep his balance and rode out of the stream in triumph.

"Ha, George!" he called back banteringly to the major. "I'll dare you to try that!"

"Charles! Charles!" said the major chidingly, "this is no time for such mad pranks! How would you, the master of Eastover, enjoy the humiliation of riding into the fort with your clothes drenched with muddy water?"

Randolph laughed boyishly, and tossed back his long brown hair. "'T would not be the first time they have been wet these two score days. I took the chance. Dare you do as much?"

The major hesitated and glanced up-stream. Of a sudden a smile overspread his face, and he said confidently:

"I'll wager a new sword-knot that I can cross as dry as you did and more quickly."

"Done!" cried Randolph. "Bear witness, Van Braam."

The major unbuckled his sword-belt and handed it to one of the borderers. Followed by the curious eyes of the rest of the party, he walked thirty or forty yards up-stream to a point where the creek was cramped between steep banks to a width of perhaps something more than twenty feet. After measuring the distance with his eye and noting that

the bank on which he stood was somewhat higher than that opposite, he drew back a little way, then ran forward, rose lightly in the air, and alighted safely on the other bank.

"Ugh, big jump!" grunted the Indians in chorus.

"*Sacrebleu!*" exclaimed the French officer.

"Mine Cott!" cried the Dutchman.

"The sword-knot is yours," said Randolph, crestfallen. "By the Lord Harry, I had forgotten that you can outjump any man in Virginia!"

The party were at work reloading the pack-horses when a sound of heavy baying burst forth in the dense forest further up the creek.

"Hark!" cried the major, his gray eyes sparkling. "Hounds! They've started a deer."

"He's coming this way," said Randolph, after listening a few moments. "He's making for the river."

"Shoot him if you can, men!" the major exclaimed. "We'll carry him to the fort as a present."

All who had rifles ran hastily to pick them up from where they had deposited them before beginning the repacking. But before any one except the young borderer who had felled the tree was in readiness, there was a glimpse among the trees of spreading horns, slender limbs, and a shapely grayish brown body; almost with the speed of a shaft of light a magnificent buck bounded across the narrow trail ahead. The animal was visible only for an instant; but, throwing his rifle to his shoulder, the borderer, seemingly without taking aim, pulled the trigger.

"Down! by all that's wonderful!" the major cried.

"A shrewd shot indeed!" exclaimed Randolph delightedly, and ran to the prostrate buck. "See, Barnaby, you hit him right behind the foreleg."

"Faith, an' t was an accident," said the borderer, though a look of satisfaction flitted across his open face.

"Of the sort that seem often to happen when you are shooting," said the major drily. "But throw the buck across one of the horses. We must be going."

Soon the whole party were once more on the way, with the horsemen this time in the lead. After going a mile or so, Randolph, who was a little in advance of his companions, drew rein upon the river bank, and, pointing through an opening among the trees, exclaimed exultantly:

"No forest camp for us tonight! Yonder is the fort."

He spoke truth. A little distance up-stream, on a tongue of land formed by the main river and a small tributary, stood a wooden structure square in shape and formed of four log buildings that served as bastions, with the intervening spaces closed by palisades perhaps twelve feet in height and sharpened at the top. The palisades and bastions were loopholed for musketry, while from the bastions peered the black muzzles of a number of small cannon. Outside the palisades stood two long barracks built of logs fresh from the axe, with roofs of bark and riven boards and with great chimneys of rough stones and clay. Not far from these buildings were a number of Indian wigwams, from holes in the tops of which little wreaths of smoke were ascending. Drawn up on the strand of the main stream were a number of bateaux and perhaps two hundred birch or elm-bark canoes. Within the fort appeared the roofs of three or four low cabins. Above the most considerable of these, from a staff fashioned from a straight and slender sapling, fluttered a broad white banner on whose folds was embroidered the *fleur-de-lis* of France.

The sun's departing rays had just kissed the flag for the last time when our party — Indians, Frenchmen, Dutchman, and Englishmen — gathered on the bank of the stream that separated them from the fort.

"*Holà!* bateaux! ferry us across!" the French officer

shouted to a little group of soldiers and Indians who had collected on the opposite bank.

At the call a couple of officers issued from the stockade and hurried down to the river. Three large bateaux were launched, and in a few minutes the whole party were standing in the sodden snow outside the gateway.

"We were expecting you, messieurs; we heard of your arrival at Venango," said an officer, who introduced himself as Lieutenant Repentigny, the second in command. He spoke no English, but the Dutchman, Van Braam, acted as interpreter. "We will entertain you as well as our scanty means will permit. Your *gentilhommes sauvages* will occupy a wigwam set apart for them; your men will have a place in the barracks; and to you, gentlemen, we beg to offer one of the cabins in the fortress. I have seen more elegant apartments in Paris and Versailles and even in Quebec, but it is the best we have to offer, and we dare to hope you will consider only the spirit of our hospitality."

Ten minutes later Van Braam, Gist, the major, and Randolph were in the cabin allotted to them. Presently food and wine were brought by two swarthy Canadians. Having done justice to the repast, the travelers sat for a time before a grateful blaze in the fireplace, and then, worn out by the fatigues of a long day's ride, retired to couches of evergreen boughs covered with bearskins and blankets.

After breakfast next morning, Lieutenant Repentigny appeared and announced that the commandant was ready to receive them. The major thereupon took some documents from his saddle-bags, and the four followed the lieutenant to the cabin over which floated the banner. The room they were ushered into was a large one, with rough log walls and a floor of hewed puncheons, whose ugliness was relieved by a bearskin or two. Most of the

furniture had evidently been manufactured on the spot, but there were a number of books on a shelf near the fireplace and other articles from the outside world. Everything was arranged with a taste that suggested the touch of a woman's hand, while an inner door that was half open when the visitors entered gave a glimpse into a more luxuriously furnished apartment beyond.

A middle-aged man, of distinguished appearance, who wore upon his breast the eight-pointed cross of a chevalier of the military order of St. Louis, received them.

"You are welcome, gentlemen," he said courteously, in good English. "Be seated, I beg of you. Have you been long on the way?"

"Forty-one days, Your Excellency," answered the young major.

"And how long was the journey, may I ask?"

"Two hundred leagues."

"Then it must be important business that has brought you so far in such a season."

"It is, sir. I am the bearer of a letter from his Excellency Robert Dinwiddie, Governor of his Britannic Majesty's province of Virginia. Here is the letter; and here, also, I beg to offer my own commission."

The chevalier did not take the documents that were held out to him. "Keep them yet a little longer, if you please, sir. Before receiving them I wish to await the arrival of Captain Reparti, who commands at our next fort of Presqu'isle. He has been sent for, and is expected at any hour."

The chevalier then conversed pleasantly with his visitors about their journey and complimented them upon their hardihood. Presently Van Braam remarked:

"I haf de honor had, Captain de Saint-Pierre, of seeing you pefore."

"Where was that?" the chevalier inquired with interest.

"You vere one of de gentlemens dot advanced and redurned de salute of our officers in de charge at Fontenoy. Lader you led one of de regiments dot trove us pack."

"That is true."

"It vas like dis," Van Braam continued, for the benefit of his companions. "Ve had for some dime fought vidout result, ven de Tuke of Cumberland tecided to charge de French cender vid his infantry. As ve mofed forvard de cannon palls dey cut great holes in our ranks, put ve vas not to pe tenied. At last ve vere up close, face to face. De firing stopped. Our officers dook off deir chapeaus and saluted. Count Chabannes, de Tuke of Biron, and de Chevalier de Saint-Pierre here mofed forvard and redurned it. 'Gentlemens of de French guard, fire!' exclaimed Sir Charles Hay. 'Fire yourselves, gentlemens of England,' replied Count d'Auteroche; 've nefer fire first!' At dot ve poured in a follye vich stretched out hundreds of de gallant regiment of de king's household. Ve pushed on and on. I could see Maréchal Saxe in his osier litter, for he vas sick vell-nigh unto teath and must pe apout carried; also King Louis and de Tauphin. Had ve py cavalry peen supported, de tay would have peen our own; put ve vere not. New patteries vere against us blanted; dot tammed Irish prigade fell upon us; ve vere addacked on efery side. At last ve vere pack trifen."

"*Mon Dieu*, but it was a gallant charge, nevertheless!" cried the chevalier, his eyes flashing at the remembrance. "Only the coolness of Maréchal Saxe and the valor of Count Lally and his Irishmen saved us. There were countless brave deeds performed that day. One incident in particular stands out in my memory. The colors of one of the Dutch regiments had been captured by three of my grenadiers, when an officer ran back alone, cut down the grenadier

who had the trophy, held the other two at bay, and retired with the colors in the midst of an infernal fire. I have never been able to learn the officer's name. Do you know it?"

"He vas an obscure man," said Van Braam carelessly. "Hafing no influence and some enemies, he vas nefer revarded for defeat."

"What was his name?" persisted the chevalier.

The Dutchman shifted uneasily in his seat; his ruddy face grew redder. Finally he reluctantly pronounced the words: "Van Braam."

"*Ciel!*" cried the chevalier, springing to his feet and offering the Dutchman his hand. "So it was you! I congratulate you upon the finest deed I have ever seen, and I have been in fifteen battles!"

The Dutchman's companions were quite as much surprised as was the Frenchman. "How does it happen that you have never told me about this?" Randolph demanded, in an aggrieved tone.

Van Braam shook his head deprecatingly. "Ve haf in Tutch a broverb vich says: '*Eigenlob stinkt;*' dot is, 'Self-braise is no recommendation,'" he answered.

The ice being thus broken, the two old soldiers proceeded to fight their battles over good-humoredly, and the listeners were really sorry when their anecdotes were brought to an end by the arrival of Captain Reparti.

The newcomer was a veritable cyclops in size, and the resemblance was rendered all the more striking by the fact that he had lost his left eye. His hair was very coarse and black; and this peculiarity, joined with the shape of his head and face, roused a suspicion that perhaps a strain of aboriginal blood ran in his veins. His hunting-shirt of deerskin was embroidered with quills of the Canadian porcupine; his leggings were gayly fringed; his feet were shod with moccasins; his fingers were ornamented with numerous

costly rings; and a heavy gold chain dangled from his belt. He spoke English, but in a broken manner, and in his surly greeting there was nothing of the quiet courtesy that marked the chevalier. He was attended by a short and squat Indian warrior, whose face, disfigured with frightful scars and streaked with black and vermillion paint, bore a singularly savage and malevolent expression.

The letter was again tendered and this time accepted. Saint-Pierre and Reparti withdrew to another room to study the document at leisure. They broke the seal; and as they perused the letter they read "all unconsciously" the full name of the man who had presented it—Major George Washington, adjutant-general of the Virginia militia.

CHAPTER II

THE DEFIANCE

THE letter was a politely worded missive which nevertheless conveyed a distinct menace. It expressed surprise that the troops of the King of France had presumed to cross the Great Lakes and to build forts in the Ohio region which was "so notoriously known to be the Property of the Crown of Great Britain. I must desire you to acquaint me by whose Authority you have lately marched from Canada with an armed Force and invaded the King of Great Britain's Territories. It becomes my Duty to require your peaceable Departure; and that you would forbear prosecuting a Purpose so interruptive of the Harmony and good Understanding which His Majesty is desirous to continue and cultivate with the Most Christian King."

"*Nom de Dieu!*" exclaimed Captain Reparti, springing to his feet. "What reply shall we give to such insolent presumption!"

"Softly! softly!" counseled the chevalier. "Nothing will be lost by our keeping up the appearance of friendship. We are in possession, and a soothing answer is less likely to provoke attack."

"Let *les Anglais* keep to their side of the mountains!" Reparti snarled, with unabated violence. "La Belle Rivière is a French stream. Their traders spoil the beaver trade. A few years ago a *castor* could be bought for a few charges of powder. Look at the price we have to pay

now! Every long-legged *coquin* who ventures in should be given over to our Indians. We have already set a good example at Pickawillany."

For some time they argued thus about what course to pursue, Reparti demanding that an immediate and defiant answer be returned, Saint-Pierre urging the desirability of diplomacy and courtesy. At length the younger man changed his attitude.

"*Eh bien,*" he said, "let us consider the matter for two days. Perhaps then we can agree."

Saint-Pierre readily acquiesced, and the two returned to the messengers.

"Messieurs," said the chevalier, "the problem you have brought us is a hard one, and we wish a day or two to consider it. In the meantime every care shall be taken for your comfort; and, that we may become better acquainted, I beg that you will do me the honor of dining with me this evening."

The envoys accepted with thanks for his kindness. A few minutes later they took their leave and returned to their cabin.

"I likes dot Chevalier de Saint-Pierre," quoth Van Braam, when they were once more seated before the fireplace. "But I sees not, major, vy you trags me six hundred miles dis vilderness drough inderbreter to act. His English is goot — petter dan mine French, and almost so goot as mine English, vich you all know is berfection not far from."

"Surely a courtly and polished gentleman," Randolph agreed, smiling at Van Braam's conceit, "one of the kind we read about in romances. But I like not the other captain. 'Fore God, if I misread him not, I would trust myself in the hands of a savage ere I would in his."

"By heaven, you do not wrong him!" exclaimed Gist.

"In my trading and exploring trips I have heard many stories of his cruelty and ferocity. But he is a bold man, and has wonderful influence among the Injuns. 'T is said that he is himself a quarter-blood Ottawa, and that he has had a whole succession of squaw mistresses."

"I should think that would ruin his hold over the Indians," Randolph interjected.

The trader lit his pipe with a coal from the fireplace. "Not at all," he said reflectively. "Injuns like a man who can drink, shout, paint his face, and dance with the best of them, and who is not ashamed to mingle his blood with theirs. We English, save the lowest riffraff of the border, look down upon the savage and want little to do with him except in the way of trade."

"How about Colonel Johnson of Mount Johnson?" objected Randolph. "He has great influence among the Six Nations, and I have heard that the daughter of a chief presides over his household."

"Johnson is an Irishman," said the trader, with the air of one who had settled the question at issue. "He handles the Injuns much as do the French. As for Reparti, he is a prime fighter, though a treacherous one. No one performed more exploits in the last war. He has roamed far beyond the region of the Upper Lakes. 'T is said there is hardly a tribe he has not visited. He can beat the hardiest warrior in anything that calls for strength or skill. *Bras-de-fer*, or Iron Arm, is the name they call him. 'T is said he once killed a full-grown bear with no weapon but a club, and that it was then he lost his eye. The Ottawa who came with him is a big chief among his people — *Le Chat*, or The Cat, he is called. He follows Reparti about like a dog. They are the devil's brood, that is the bond of union, I suppose. Both hate the English as I do a rattlesnake. Reparti knows our traders cut into the profits of the fur

trade, in which he has a hand. He is supposed to act as the king's agent. But he is thick with 'the governor-general and the intendant, and really manages the business for his own advantage. He divides his profits with them; they wink at his lawlessness; and only the king, who is far away, is the loser. Until lately his gains have been very great. 'T is said he is one of the richest men in all New France. I feel pretty sure that he had a hand in stirring up the Injuns to murder our traders at Pickawillany and other places. Doubtless he would be pleased if he could arrange some mishap for us."

"I think we can trust the chevalier to hold him in check," said Washington, who had been listening attentively.

"Eh, well, what matters a little risk when the stake is so large?" asked Gist soberly. "Only one who has journeyed far into it can have a notion of the vast resources of this virgin region. For hundreds of leagues it stretches away — fine level land, well watered, and rich beyond the dream of anything the world has known. 'T is a second Land of Canaan — only a hundred times larger. The race which masters it will be the Chosen People of the future."

"If we could come out with whole skins and our hair on, I would n't mind a bit of a conflict," said Randolph. "You know, George, you promised me some adventures! But our journey has been more productive of hardships than romance."

"Patience! patience! Charles!" the major returned. "Our journey is but half over. Many strange things may yet befall ere we see again the old town of Williamsburg. But I freely confess that the tamer the return journey the greater my satisfaction."

"Mine Cott, yes!" the Dutchman said heartily. "A whole skin it vas petter dan a holey vone, I bromise you!"

Late in the afternoon, after a visit to their men and

guides outside the fort, they began to make ready for the chevalier's dinner.

"Egad!" exclaimed Randolph, ruefully surveying the contents of his saddlebags, "'t is not much primping and preening I can indulge in."

"It would seem that a gentleman who has a sheet of foolscap from the College of William and Mary ought to be capable of atoning for his lack of fine raiment by the brilliancy of his conversation," suggested the major.

"Tut, tut, George! But preserve us! What is the matter with Van Braam! Is it apoplexy?"

All looked at the Dutchman, who had suddenly turned as red as a turkey cock and was struggling for breath.

"De shirt! de shirt!" he gasped. "Bull me off de shirt! I vas near sdrangle!"

Randolph seized the offending garment, and by dint of hard tugging managed to strip it from the Dutchman's bulky form.

Van Braam took several long breaths and sat down limply in a chair. "I vas vash it at Venango," he explained presently. "It vas shrink. I must veer de tirty vone, mine Cott!"

Even the ordinarily impassive face of the major relaxed into a smile.

An hour later they appeared at the commandant's door and were ushered into the same room in which they had delivered their message that morning. During their absence it had undergone a remarkable transformation. The rough puncheon floor was almost hidden from sight by bearskins; the bare ugliness of the rude walls was pleasantly relieved with evergreen boughs in which were interwoven branches covered with red berries; and in the center of the room stood a table overspread with a white cloth and bearing a number of pieces of heavy silver and

considerable china, with here and there cruder vessels of birch bark and wood. Ropes of fir and hemlock extended from corner to corner of the room, being caught up to the ceiling at the center, thus forming a sort of canopy. Light was afforded by wax candles in two silver candlesticks that stood on the table. The whole effect was so pleasing that the admiring guests almost forgot they were hundreds of miles from the civilized world and in the very heart of a savage wilderness.

Besides the chevalier, the only occupants of the room were an old French serving woman and a withered Indian squaw, who were busying themselves about the table; but scarcely were the first greetings over when an inner door opened, and the person who was doubtless the principal agent in the transformation appeared.

"My daughter Alfrede," said the chevalier with accents of pride.

Each of the guests in turn bent over the slim hand which the girl held out to him.

"Welcome to our wilderness lodge, gentlemen," she said in perfect English.

"Such kindness is almost enough to make us ashamed of our mission," said Randolph.

"Did you ever hear of a Frenchman being aught but courteous — even to an enemy?" she made answer, and there was a laughing challenge in her dark eyes.

Before Randolph could make a suitable reply, Lieutenant Repentigny and Captain Reparti arrived. The lieutenant greeted all present with perfect courtesy; but the giant captain, who now wore the full uniform of an officer of colonial regulars, which became him less than his wilder garb of the morning, merely cast a malevolent glance out of his single eye at the envoys, then turned to Mademoiselle Alfrede.

"Mademoiselle grows more charming each day," he said, with an exaggerated bow and a wolfish look that gave Randolph a strangely uncomfortable feeling. "She is—"

"Captain Reparti, where have you left your manners?" demanded the girl sharply in French.

"Ah, pardon! messieurs, pardon! I had not observe!" he said quickly, and vouchsafed a surly greeting, which they acknowledged somewhat stiffly.

"I should have said '*true Frenchman*' a moment ago," the girl whispered in an aside to Randolph.

The meal was now announced, and Randolph and Van Braam found themselves honored with places beside Mademoiselle Alfrede, Major Washington and Captain Reparti being seated next the chevalier. The worthy Dutchman seemed overjoyed at his good fortune, though Randolph suspected from certain covert glances that he was regretting the clean shirt he had been unable to wear, and was secretly reproaching himself for not having made a greater effort to keep it on. Fortunately the one he wore was of dark material; only a little was visible above his buff coat; and some allowance could be made for a man who had traveled so far through the wilderness. Besides, the Dutchman's good humor and his naïve sincerity would have sufficed to overcome the prejudices of one inclined to be more critical than mademoiselle.

"Ve vas such a sight not expecting, mademoiselle," said he, in his best manner, "as a pit of Baradise in such a vilderness vid a Lily of France plooming derein. You vas no toutb de goot fairy to whom ve all dis pleasure owe."

The girl was sincerely pleased. "Do not bestow too much of the credit upon me," she said, laughing. "I fear that my good old *bonne*, Jeanne, and the Indian woman, Marie, did most of the work. However, I am happy if our efforts are appreciated."

"They are indeed!" Randolph asserted, with profound conviction. "When one has for weeks eaten little but burnt venison, parched corn, and ash-cakes, with naught but a log for a table, this is as near to heaven as he should ever wish to be."

The conversation ran on thus for some minutes, Van Braam declaring again and again that never was there such delightful hospitality, Randolph chiming in occasionally but devoting his time chiefly to watching the charming grace with which the girl attended to the various duties that fell to her as hostess. He also observed that her gown, which was evidently the work of no provincial modiste, fitted her slender form to perfection, that she had a profusion of dark hair, dancing brown eyes, and a tempting mouth.

"I am surprised, Mademoiselle de Saint-Pierre, that you speak such admirable English," Randolph ventured, when there was a lull in the conversation.

"As goot as vat I mineself speaks," said Van Braam.

A gleam of amusement came into the girl's face; she nodded her acknowledgments to Van Braam.

"'T is in no way surprising when you know the facts," she said. "I am not all French. My mother was Scotch — the daughter of what some English call a Jacobite. After the failure of the Earl of Mar's rising, my grandfather took refuge in France and was never reconciled to the House of Hanover. My mother taught me English; and, besides, until two years ago, the chevalier, my father, was attached to our embassy in London, and, of course, I resided with him there."

"You must find the wilds of America very dull after Versailles and St. James's," said Randolph.

"I do not regret the change," she said sincerely. "There is much at both courts that I dislike. I prefer a log hut in

the distant recesses of Nouvelle-France to the life most women lead at court."

Randolph thought of the fat German Duchess of Yarmouth who was the acknowledged mistress of his own sovereign, and of the more charming Madame de Pompadour who ruled Louis, strangely called *Le Bien Aimé*. He recalled the stories he had heard of orgies in the Parc-au-Cerfs. The noxious air of courts was not the place for this pure-petaled flower.

"However, we had no choice," the girl continued frankly. "My father disdained to conciliate the person who dispenses all favors. He was recalled from London and practically banished from France. But we are happy here. There is much that is strange and wonderful! I love the wild woods, the streams, the birds, the bees, the flowers! I revel in them. I think I almost like the Indians too. They remind me of the old Romans — so stoical, so proud. At least they are what they are. Do you see that rug?" She pointed to a great bearskin that lay beside Randolph's chair.

"Good heavens, it must have belonged to the great-grandfather of all the bears!" commented the young Virginian.

"My father and I have a pack of hounds," she continued, by way of explanation. "Many a joyous day have we spent in the woods with them! These pelts are all trophies of our hunts. One day the owner of that one caught Franchette, my favorite, in his great paws. If you were to look at the skin more closely, you would find a bullet hole between the eyes."

"And who fired the bullet?" Randolph asked.

"Mademoiselle herself!" cried the chevalier, who had listened to the story. "Franchette was saved."

"Bravo, a new-world Diana!" exclaimed Randolph,

with an enthusiasm that brought the blushes to her face.

"Ah, yes, I enjoy the wilderness," the girl continued, "though, *hélas*, I shudder sometimes when I think of the horrors a war might bring. Only last night I dreamed of such a war. I thought I saw the glare of burning houses and heard the cries of women and little children. Then I saw a train of weeping captives guarded by painted savages led by my own countrymen. Oh, *bon Dieu! bon Dieu!* it was horrible! horrible! Even now I can scarce convince myself that it was not something I shall live to see."

"If you love Nature so much, I think you would like our life in Virginia," said Randolph, anxious to turn her thoughts from so painful a subject. "There are no real towns. Every one lives in the country. The weather is pleasant, and much of one's time is spent out of doors. There are horses and hounds, fox-hunting and much visiting. Even the slaves are contented and happy. At least it is a healthy life. I know no other I would prefer."

"Growers of *tabac*, is it not so?" interposed Reparti, with half-veiled insolence.

"Owners of great plantations, gentlemen to the manor born, if you please, Captain Reparti!" said the girl, with a haughty look at the captain. "Oh, I have heard of Virginia life, Mr. Randolph. 'T is delightful, I doubt not. Tell me more of it."

With youthful enthusiasm Randolph responded. His subject was an inspiring one, for who has not admired the life of the Old Dominion, in which was then developing that generation of statesmen unsurpassed in the history of the race? The speaker was young and handsome, with that freshness of spirit which always exercises a powerful fascination even over those who by reason of age and experience have seen something of the emptiness of life and

have lost their own illusions. Naturally a good talker with a pleasant voice, he was on this occasion inspired to outdo himself; with no apparent effort he managed to throw about the life he described the glamour of romance, and several times touched those higher chords of feeling which awake a response in the breasts of others. The girl listened with unaffected and even absorbed interest; conversation at the other end of the table slackened, then ceased altogether. Even Reparti lent a reluctant ear.

Of them all, none hearkened with greater content than Van Braam. The worthy Dutchman sat nodding an admiring and almost paternal approval of his young friend's effort, while at the same time he did not neglect the appetizing viands before him. By this time he was quite content with his first decision regarding the shirt, and was, if the truth must be told, happy that he had worn the loose instead of the tight garment. But there came a time when even he had reached the limits of his capacity, and this time was almost coincident with the conclusion of Randolph's description. Observing that the guests had finished, mademoiselle rose after a little interval, and the gentlemen rose with her.

At the door of the inner apartment she paused and turned to them, a dainty figure, charmingly outlined against the light beyond.

"Good night, messieurs," she said, with a courtesy so inclusive that each felt he had a part in it.

"Methinks, Captain de Saint-Pierre, that the room is darker than it was," said Washington, when the gentlemen were seated again.

The chevalier's face kindled. "Aye," said he, "she is one who brings light into dark places."

The guests now raised their glasses to their host, and,

with thanks for their courtesy, he rose, and, lifting his glass of Burgundy with grace, said:

"Messieurs, I give you a toast which I trust each will drink in all sincerity. Our sovereigns, the Kings of France and England — may they and their faithful subjects forever abide in honorable peace, amity, and friendship!"

All drank the toast standing and reversed their glasses with a low cheer, save only Reparti, who merely raised the liquor to his lips and set it down untasted, mumbling something to himself.

The omission passed without remark, though not without notice. Other toasts were given and drunk; and each man partook as he chose of the wine and brandy, of which there was abundance in sundry stout bottles. Each drank according to his taste and temperament: the major, Randolph, and Gist somewhat sparingly of the wine; the lieutenant and the chevalier more generously of the same beverage, as became men accustomed to its use since early childhood; Van Braam used both drinks indifferently; while Reparti tossed off glass after glass of brandy.

It was not long before the giant's single eye began to glitter more truculently; and, despite the chevalier's efforts to prevent, he turned the conversation to the subject of the visitors' mission.

"*Les Anglais* think they will this great valley possess, *n'est-ce pas vrai?*!" he said thickly, then paused and glanced challengingly at the envoys, who sat discreetly silent.

"*Mais* nevaire! messieurs, nevaire. 'T is the possession of the Most Christian King, whom may the saints preserve! No heretics may enter in without his most gracious permission. It was discover' and explore' by Père Marquette, Joliet, and, above all, by that bold warrior le Sieur de la Salle, and confirm' by solemn grant of his Holiness the Pope. You are too late, messieurs! Four years ago

the Chevalier Céleron de Bienville pass' down La Belle Rivière taking possession and burying leaden plates as the token of our sovereignty.

"We hol' the valley! This is why you see our forts. Two summers more and a chain of them will stretch from the pine forests of the north to the cane brakes of La Belle Louisiane. You will be hem' between the mountains and the sea, messieurs. And suppose you care to contes' the question with us. You are the more numerous, *mais, bah!* You are too slow! We are there and gone again before you have stir. *Non! non!* the fleur-de-lis shall ever float over these hills, rivers, and flowery plains. Nouvelle-France shall be the faires' jewel in the crown of our king. *Voilà tout."*

The envoys listened with heightened color but in silence. Once the major seemed about to speak, but controlled the impulse. When the Canadian finished, however, Randolph, younger than the others, and with an aversion toward the speaker which perhaps the others did not feel, leaned forward and, fixing a level glance upon Reparti, said:

"We thank you, sir, for what you have told us. 'T is exactly what we came so far to learn!"

"It is to you welcome," returned the Canadian, with a shrug. "Listen, *garçon. Mon ami* here," indicating the chevalier, "believes in peace. He hope' that all may be arrange' without the clash of arms. I think not so, nor do I desire it. Nothing more please' my sight than the scalp of a dead Englishman, unless it be a living one as he dance about the stake. If you be conten' remain in your *petit* strip beyond the mountains, it shall be peace. But if you come again, your scalps shall swing in the smoke of the wigwams; your skulls be the playthings of wolves and bears. Yes, and we will sen' to your ver' homes bands of hair-dressers of whose work you shall not have the reason to complain! Even your traders shall not enter. Already

some have been sen' to Quebec and some to France; others—
But let me tell you a story, *garçon*!

"Las' year there live at Pickawillany on the Rivière la Roche a chieftain whom we call' La Demoiselle. He hearken' not to the words of his Canadian father, Onontio, but incline' his ear to the traders of your nation, receive' them, allow' them build a post in his village. Word come from France this mus' not be, this nes' mus' be destroy'. Charles Langlade and another whom we need not name, they strike the war-post at Michilimackinac. Our brothers, the Ottawas and Ojibwas, take up the hatchet. Two hunder' and fefty strong we come down the Lac des Hurons in our birch canoes, pass through the Détroit, paddle up the Rivière des Miamis, cross the portage, and one June morning fall upon the village of La Demoiselle. The frighten' squaws they flee from the corn fields like deer before the wolves; some escape, but many are carry to wig-wams around the Upper Lakes. Fourteen warriors were kill', among them La Demoiselle. Five traders fall into our han's. One was injure'. He was stab' and scalp' by an Ottawa. The rest were strip' of their goods and sen' to Quebec. La Demoiselle had shown grand courage. *Les gentilhommes sauvages* put him into their kettles, boil', and ate of him. He seem tough to me, but they swear he make them wax in the strength and the courage. Thus was the nes' wipe' out as in winter one destroy' a den of *serpents à sonnettes*. What think you of the exploit, *garçon*? Was it not more glorious than to make the pretty speech to a girl as you were now?"

The sneering tone was more than Randolph could bear. Disregarding the major's warning glances, he said slowly and distinctly:

"Fore God! it was a cruel and wicked deed, more worthy of fiends from hell than of true Frenchmen!"

"*Nom de Dieu!*" the Frenchman hissed, springing to his feet. "Do you preten' to pass the judgment on my acts?"

Randolph's glance did not waver. "You asked my opinion. I gave it; I will abide by it. None but a bushranger would have been guilty of such an act."

The captain was not a pleasant sight to see. His single eye, bloodshot with rage and brandy, glittered like that of a rattlesnake about to strike. Half intoxicated and unaccustomed to opposition, he did not belie the reputation that had won for him the epithet of "*l'Enragé*" — the Madman.

"No one ever so spoke to Hertel Reparti and live!" he shrieked. Whipping out his sword, he ran, despite the cries of the chevalier, around the table at Randolph, who, not having anticipated an attack, was in no position for defense. The Virginian would have been wholly at the madman's mercy had it not been that in Reparti's path was one who, accustomed to the sight of brawls, had partly read the giant's purpose. In spite of his stoutness, Van Braam was a skillful swordsman; since quitting the army he had been a fencing master. With a quickness that was surprising, he sprang up, drawing his weapon as he did so, and, just as Reparti made a vicious pass, struck up the blade.

"Out of my way, Dutch pig!" Reparti shrieked.

"Goot heafens!" roared Van Braam, "dot vas a felon's plow! Had it gone home, I vould haf you like a sausage sblit!"

By this time the chevalier was on the scene. "Put up your sword, Captain Reparti," he thundered, "or, by the mass, I will have the guards disarm you! And do you, good gentlemen, compose yourselves and sit down once more. The captain does not know what he is about. I

had no thought that the conversation would come to this, else I would have stopped it long ago."

Reparti's rage had by this time somewhat spent itself; his head was clearer. Slowly he slid his sword back into its scabbard. Randolph, who had drawn his own weapon, and Van Braam, who was the picture of righteous indignation and, for all his good nature, looked as though he would have liked a conflict, did likewise.

"At some other time and in some more fitting place, *garçon*, perhaps I shall have the honor of meet' you with none to stand between," the giant said menacingly.

"The Randolphs have never feared man nor devil yet," was the ready answer. "May God forgive me if when that time comes I do not rid the world of such a ruffian."

"*Leege vaten klinken het luidst'* — Empty casks de greatest noise make!" quoth Van Braam. "I vill dot poy against you venture, an' vere you de foul fiend Peelzepub himself! I did him drain. To guard, to drust, or to gif de edge I knows no better."

"To all of you, *messieurs les Anglais*," said Reparti, ignoring Randolph's and Van Braam's words, "what I say is true. The written answer may be politely word', but it mean war! war! Already the council fires have been light'. Already the savages are accept' the black wampum belts. Already the *chichikoue* is heard from village to village; and, squat' in their wigwams, the medicine men are dream' of English prisoners and English scalps. Peace or war — you may choose. But if you cross the mountains again, it is war. *Voilà tout!*"

Since the quarrel began Major Washington had remained silent, though at the critical moment he strode forward intent to interfere. But now he seemed to feel that the Frenchman's words required an answer.

"It grieves me to hear this talk of war," he said, and in

his voice and manner was a loftiness that made all lend ear. "I join with our good host in wishing peace. 'T is sinful to draw the sword save when all other means have failed. But if war must come, let it come! God save King George! say I. He will not want for men willing to uphold his just claims to this great wilderness. Whether it be war or peace, these virgin valleys will in generations to come be inhabited by vast populations speaking the English tongue. 'T is destiny. God has willed it!"

CHAPTER III

THE WARNING

“WHEN think you we’ll see the valley again, Barnaby?”

Barnaby Currin finished wiping out the priming-pan of his rifle, glanced cautiously at the knot of soldiers collected at the other end of the log barracks, then looked up at Randolph, who was standing by the fireplace.

“God knows, Charles, an’ he ain’t tellin’,” he said soberly. “If some of these frog-eatin’ Frenchers had their way, I’m thinkin’ we’d never see it.”

Randolph gave one of the logs in the fireplace a kick that sent the sparks flying up the wide-mouthed chimney, and threw an added glare out upon his boyish ardent face.

“Why do you say that?” he demanded.

“Faith, see how they do be glowerin’ at us!”

Randolph looked at the soldiers, and saw that they were, in truth, casting covert glances toward him and his companion that could hardly be construed as friendly.

“Why don’t we take the back track?” persisted the borderer.

“T is the stubbornness of those infernal Indians that keeps us,” said Randolph vindictively. “Saint-Pierre promised us canoes and gave us his sealed answer before he left for Presqu’isle. We’d have started yesterday, but the sachems would n’t go, as you know. We can’t leave ‘em under French influence; and, now that the horses and all the men but you are gone back to Venango, we need the rascals to work the canoes.”

"What excuses do the Injuns be givin'?" asked the borderer, with the air of one who knew the answer.

The scowl on Randolph's face deepened. "They're still weary, they say. The food is good, their wigwam warm, they want to rest another night — confound 'em!"

The borderer nodded comprehendingly. "Dhrunk?" he queried.

"As old Dahomey Nat when we found him in the plantation wine cellar," said Randolph, giving the log a yet more savage kick. "What do you know?"

The borderer got up and drew nearer Randolph. "Charles," he said in a low voice, "I've been keepin' me eyes an' me ears open since we've been in this place."

"Yes?" said Randolph questioningly. "You usually do that."

"The Frinch rascals do be runnin' to our Injuns, a-givin' of 'em this, a-givin' of 'em that, an' a-keepin' 'em dhrunk the whole of the time. That strappin' one-eyed son-iv-a-divil that you had a ruction with was to see 'em yesterday before he set off towards the lake. I watched him talkin' to 'em an' to that ugly Cat, an' he did be lookin' as though he meant mischief."

"Likely enough," said Randolph eagerly. "But do you know anything for certain?"

"Nothing I could take oath to on the Evangel," returned the borderer cautiously. "But, as sure as I'm the Scotch-Irishman you helped elope across the Potomac, they're up to some divility!"

"If you're right, we'll find a way to match them," said Randolph confidently. "If you're wrong, we'll soon be on the way home. Ellen and little Barnaby'll be glad to see you, or I miss my guess."

"Sure, an' it's I that 'll be glad to see Ellen an' the boy — bless his little curly-headed soul!" said the bor-

derer, and a look that was good to see came into his face.
“The sooner we’re started the better, say I!”

After some further talk Randolph reentered the fort, wondering as he walked along if there was any truth in Barnaby’s suspicions. As he passed the commandant’s quarters, the trend of his thoughts was suddenly changed by a voice; it was that of the old French serving woman, who was hurrying out toward him.

“*Un moment, monsieur,*” she said; “mademoiselle would to you speak.”

Turning, she led the way into the house. Randolph followed, wondering what might be the cause of the summons, yet withal by no means averse to the interview. His guide conducted him into the same room as on previous occasions, and presently Mademoiselle Alfrede entered. She was simply dressed, but was as good as ever to look upon; he thought the effect of a pair of dainty moccasins ornamented with painted porcupine quills particularly fascinating.

“I was obliged to speak with some member of your party, Monsieur Randolph,” she said, in tones that showed traces of agitation; “I felt that I knew you better than any of the others.”

He bowed his acknowledgments. “I feel highly flattered, mademoiselle, at being so singled out.”

“T is no time for polite speeches,” she said soberly, as they seated themselves. “I wish to talk about a matter of very great seriousness. Has it not seemed strange to you that you were unable to induce your Indian guides to take the homeward way?”

“Mademoiselle,” he answered, seeing vaguely what was coming, “we have been much provoked by their behavior, which we have attributed in part to the vagaries of the native character. But I admit we have suspected that

there might be outside influences at work upon them. Mr. Currin, our remaining borderer, with whom I have just been talking, is certain of it."

She hesitated as if uncertain whether she ought to proceed. "The man is right. There are such influences," she said at last.

"Are the Indians aware of them?"

"I think not. As I understand it, they are merely dupes."

"But what is the object?"

Her face flushed. "Mr. Randolph," she said, "humiliating as it is to my French pride, I think I ought to tell you all. There is a plot on foot to ambuscade your party on the way down the river."

"Who is back of this plot?" he demanded.

"Captain Reparti," answered the girl, after renewed hesitation.

"I was sure it was not your father," he said, in tones of relief. "I would swear that he is the soul of honor. But why does Reparti wish to waylay us when we are envoys, and, according to the custom of nations, exempt from violence?"

"He hates all the English. He wants war, and thinks such an act would precipitate it. He thinks that if he could make way with the Half-King and the other chiefs with you, the French party among the Mingoes would be able to control. The plan is to keep you here for two days longer by detaining the Indians. Captain Reparti and the sachem Le Chat left yesterday ostensibly for Presqu'isle; in reality to visit an Ottawa village on the lake and enlist warriors for the work. He wishes to make it appear that the deed was the work of Indians alone—that is, if he should find it convenient to conceal his part in it. He expects to lie in wait with his war party at the

Great Drift, and there destroy you. He has boasted that he will take you personally alive and give you over to the savages. You must by all means leave tomorrow, and travel swiftly."

The Virginian rose to his feet. "Egad!" he cried, with kindling look. "He must catch his hare first. How did you learn all this?"

"From the Indian woman, Marie."

"Is she trustworthy?"

"Last winter at Niagara we found her sick, deserted, and starving in the woods. I cared for her, and she has been as faithful as a dog. I would trust her in anything."

"T was an act of kindness such as I should expect from you," he said. "But why did she think you would be interested in us? To her we must have seemed your enemies."

For some reason the girl blushed and hesitated. Finally she said: "Marie knows you are our guests — that you are envoys. Even an Indian respects ambassadors."

"Whether or not she speaks the truth," said he, "the matter must be looked into. I cannot express how much indebted we are to you for warning us. I hope that sometime I may be able to repay you. But I fear that soon our countries will be at war and that then you, too, will hate me as your enemy."

"If hostilities do come, I shall cry '*Vive la belle France!*' with all my heart," she said, with flashing eyes. "But the Scriptures say we should pray for our enemies, monsieur."

"The Scriptures enumerate still another thing that one should do for one's enemies," he said, drawing nearer. "I am happy that you believe in the Scriptures, mademoiselle."

"Do not take too much for granted," she replied, with an arch look from beneath long lashes. "I may not be so pious as you think, monsieur."

He drew still nearer. "I shall be grateful even for your prayers," he said gayly. "Whatever may be the sentiments with which our kings regard each other, I shall always be your friend. If war comes, I shall hope for better days when you will perhaps no longer regard me as an enemy. But if it does come, I shall do my part."

"Be careful, monsieur, else perhaps I may see you before peace is declared," she said, with a note of raillery in her voice.

"What do you mean by that?"

"French soldiers are valiant; I mean that perhaps you may be taken prisoner."

"If such a fate would mean that I were to enjoy the happiness you mention, I am sure I should prove false to my duty," he said meaningly.

"*Ciel!* you are as ready as a Frenchman with your compliments!" she cried.

The red blood mounted to their faces. For a few moments there was silence. They were standing very near each other, for she, too, had risen. He felt an insane impulse to draw nearer still!

"My compliments are never empty ones," he said unsteadily, overcoming the impulse. "However soon your gallant countrymen capture me, I shall at least not be taken by Captain Reparti and his band of cutthroat redskins. Forewarned will be forearmed with us. By the Lord Harry, we will give him a reception he will remember!"

"Oh, but you must not attempt that!" she cried earnestly. "He will have an overwhelming force, and you would have no chance. Besides, I do not want bloodshed. I still hope for peace, as does my father. You must leave early tomorrow and avoid a conflict. If my father were here, I am sure he would know how to put a stop to the attempt; but he is not, and I fear that Lieutenant

Repentigny is at least a passive participant. You must flee!"

"And let this roysterer, treacherous bushranger say that I was afraid? Never, mademoiselle!"

"You must not speak so disparagingly of Captain Reparti. Remember he is a Frenchman," she said, pretending to be offended.

"I congratulate you on the fact," said he sarcastically, not taking her speech seriously. "Of course I should be more discreet. Yesterday morning I heard him boast that he had asked the chevalier for your hand."

"Monsieur, you are very bold!" she said severely, and with her moccasined foot she began tapping lightly upon the floor.

"I beg your pardon," he said, penitent yet angry, as he saw that Reparti had spoken the truth. "I know I have been rude. I did not take the boast seriously. Perhaps the offer has even been accepted."

"Why should it not be?" she demanded airily, with a toss of her head. "Marriages are *arranged* in my country. He is a renowned soldier and is one of the richest men in all Nouvelle-France."

"And has besides half a dozen squaw mistresses, I understand," Randolph interjected, with a savageness that surprised him.

"Monsieur!" she cried, and stamped her foot.

"Anger becomes you, mademoiselle," he said judicially.

With an air of disdain, she shrugged her shoulders and turned her back on him.

"A pair of pink ears are not to be despised, but I prefer your face, mademoiselle," he continued, determined not to be beaten. And he stepped in front of her.

Her indignation broke down. She burst out laughing. "*Chut!*" she said, "let us be serious! Promise me that you

will throw aside your stubborn pride and leave in the morning." Her voice took on a tone of entreaty that appealed to him powerfully.

"At least I will tell my companions what you have told me," he coneeded. "The decision will rest with them."

"Do so, and do not lose a moment," she said, with evident relief.

Randolph was loth to withdraw, for, in spite of the startling news he had received, he had found the interview a pleasant one. But he felt that he must no longer keep the information from his coinpanions.

"Shall I see you again?" he asked, reluctantly moving toward the door.

"Probably not. It would be better for my father, I think, that there should be no suspicion that I betrayed the plan. He has enemies at court who would gladly seize on any pretext to injure him."

"Could you not at least come and see us off?" he ventured boldly.

The girl thought for a moment irresolutely. "I will be on the lower bastion," she said at last. "Marie will find out when you are to start."

"I shall look for you. Until then, adieu," he said; and, kissing the hand she held out to him with a fervor that to an older person the length of their acquaintance might not have seemed to warrant, he took his departure and hurried to his coinpanions.

To them he unfolded in a few moments what he had heard. "The question is whether we shall try to escape or stay and fight," he said in conclusion. "I should hate to give that bushranger the opportunity to say that we ran away."

"I would rather he should say it several times than have my scalp flapping from some warrior's greasy belt," said

Washington, drily. "No, Charles, we must pull up stakes and make a run for it. I would myself like to make the closer acquaintance of this hectoring captain and his minions, but I would prefer to have some companies of Virginians at my back. If I mistake not, the opportunity will come. But now we must see our Indians and prevail upon them to go with us tomorrow."

"I see, George, that you are determined to have me buy that sword-knot," said Randolph, laughing. "So be it. Perhaps it will be safer not to die in debt, even though, I presume, there are no debtor's prisons in heaven, eh, Van Braam?"

"Or in the other place," added the major. "But — to work."

Lieutenant Repentigny made some difficulties about their visiting the Indians again that day, but the major demanded the right peremptorily, and finally they were allowed to pass through the gate to the wigwam. They found their guides squatting round a little fire with their blankets wrapped closely about them.

"Hearken, brothers!" said Washington. "When the sun comes up again, will you be ready to set out?"

"We would tarry yet another day with our father Onontio," answered the Half-King, who, as the most considerable of the four, acted as spokesman. "Our feet are sore; our bones are not yet warm; and Onontio is kinder than we thought. He has promised that if we will remain another day we shall each receive a new gun, and that a canoe-load of goods shall be sent to our village."

"Are my brothers foolish beaver, not foxes, to be caught by such a snare? Hearken; Onontio is a singing bird! The chief with the one eye is even now on his way to secure a war party of your enemies, the Ottawas, and lie in wait for us at the Great Drift. He would kill your brothers the

English, because they are English; you he would slay because you are our friends, and because he thinks by so doing the friends of Onontio among the Mingoes would then have most weight around the council fire."

"Does Conotocarious speak truth, brother?" asked the Half-King of Gist.

"When has he spoken otherwise?" returned the trader. "Yea, brothers, there be snakes in the grass! We must tread warily, else we shall be bitten!"

"Then we will outrun the snakes!" said the sachem. "At sunrise we will set out. No Ottawa shall catch us. I have spoken."

"The chief is wise," said Washington. "So be it. Be ready."

The polite efforts of Lieutenant Repentigny to prevail upon his guests to remain yet another day proved unavailing. So it came about that just as the first cold beams of the December sun touched the tops of the hemlocks the four envoys, with Currin and the Indian guides, stepped into two birch canoes and paddled out into the stream. Around them in every direction stretched the bleak and pathless forest, hiding they knew not what hardships and perils in its primeval fastnesses. The air was freezing cold, and the black water was filled with floating ice. It was a morning to bring home to the travelers the stern realities of the six-hundred-mile journey upon which they were plunging.

The point of embarkation was a little above the fort, and as the flotilla came in sight of the last bastion Randolph looked curiously to see if mademoiselle had kept her word. Early as it was, she had, indeed. She stood upon the top-most rampart. As the boats passed the bastion, the four called right heartily:

"Farewell, mademoiselle!"

"*Adieu, messieurs, et bon voyage, bon voyage!*" she cried in answer.

"Cott pless her! She vas a prave girl!" said Van Braam, wiping his eyes.

A bend in the river soon hid the fort from view; but as Randolph turned to wave a last farewell, she was still standing there upon the bastion, her slender form silhouetted against the pink morning sky, and he thought he heard her say again, "*Bon voyage!*" A moment more and she was out of sight. As he bent forward to ply his paddle in the icy water, Randolph thought of the manifold perils which lurked about her and wondered, with a strange clutching at his throat, if he would ever see her again.

CHAPTER IV

THE CABIN IN THE CLEARING

RANDOLPH, Van Braam, and Barnaby Currin were returning from the Ohio. Encumbered rather than aided by their half-starved horses, they traveled in the footsteps of that young leader who had hastened onward through the wintry wilderness to make his report to the Scotch governor at Williamsburg and become "the rising hope of Virginia."

All unconsciously they passed over ground that eighteen months later was to be the scene of a great battle and a great defeat. They crossed and recrossed the frozen Monongahela, and at the mouth of the Youghiogheny came to Queen Alequippa's town, where they were entertained by royalty in a flea-infested wigwam, in return for which hospitality they presented the queen with an axe and a bottle of brandy, which latter her Serene Highness esteemed much the better gift of the two. Some miles beyond they met a train of pack-horses loaded with materials for an English fort at the Forks of the Ohio, the gateway of the imperial West, and a day later a few families going out to settle on the grant recently obtained by the Ohio Company.

When the party had passed, Barnaby looked long and thoughtfully after them until the great gray tree trunks hid them from view. "The frontier pot'll soon be b'ilin'," he said sagely. "I'm sorry for them people. The Frenchers won't stand settlers, or I miss my guess."

Late one afternoon a cabin set down in the midst of the woods lay in their path — a crude affair of unbarked logs chinked with leaves and moss and covered with squares of bark held down by poles. The rough stone chimney scarcely reached above the level of the roof, and the door of bark was hung upon hinges made of withes.

"I see no smoke," said Randolph, when they reached the edge of the little clearing. "The place must be deserted."

"Hello! hello!" shouted Barnaby.

His voice echoed through the desolate woods, startling a solitary crow perched in the dead top of a distant oak; but no frowsy head appeared at the door in answer to the call.

"If the folks are at home, they certainly must be deaf," said Barnaby. He advanced without further ceremony, pulled aside the rude door, and peered in.

"My God!" he cried, starting back in horror. "No wonder they did n't answer!"

Randolph and Van Braam looked in and saw the reason for his exclamation. On the earthen floor lay a man and woman and three children scalped and mangled in a manner not to be described. The bodies were almost naked, and the one poor room had been stripped of all articles of value.

"Mine Cott! mine Cott!" cried Van Braam, wringing his hands.

"The devil's work has been done here!" said Randolph, sickened by the sight. "May God punish the guilty!"

"T is the handiwork of outlyin' Injuns," said Barnaby, handling his rifle and looking eagerly about him. "It's been done some time, for see how the poor bodies have been gnawed by wolves and bears."

"Look thar!" he continued presently, pointing to a cabalistic sign painted on the inside of the door. "That shows it to be the work of French Ottawas. A trader told

me once that a war party always laves a mark so that their tribe will get the credit for the divility, an' that mark, he said, was the mark of the Ottawas. I expect that ugly Cat an' that one-eyed son-of-a-divil Reparti had a hand in it."

"T is what will befall all our border settlements if these plotting Frenchmen are not driven out," said Randolph. "For two generations the frontiers of New York and New England have been harried by hellish bands. Our turn has come, I fear. This might happen to your little home, Barnaby."

"May de *duivel* his choicest room in hell for such fiends reserve!" exclaimed the indignant Van Braam.

After burying the bodies as best they could inside the cabin, the travelers turned their backs on this wreck of fond hopes of prosperity and happiness — such a scene as for generations was to be all too common on the blood-drenched Borderland — and journeyed on. The snow grew ever deeper; the frozen tree trunks cracked about them with reports like pistol shots. Their food supply diminished, for game was scarce; the wolves made horrible music around their campfires: but they passed through the gorge of Laurel Hill, climbed the parallel walls of the Alleghenies, paused at the trading post of Will's Creek on the upper Potomac, and then steering toward the lofty crests of the Blue Ridge, crossed Opequon Creek one clear afternoon, and surmounting a hill, came in sight of Barnaby's cabin in the beautiful valley of the lower Shenandoah.

For days the young Irishman had looked forward to this home-coming with feverish impatience. More than once Randolph had urged him to hurry ahead and leave him and Van Braam to follow more slowly; but, as the weeks of exposure and hardship had begun to tell on Randolph's health, Barnaby had resolutely refused to do so. The

Irishman's anxiety to reach his home can scarcely have been due to its palatial character, for, to outward appearances, it was at this season of the year not particularly prepossessing. The farm was ample in size, containing in all more than five hundred acres, but only forty or fifty acres had been cleared of forest, though another tract perhaps one-third as large had been deadened. Near the center of the clearing stood the cabin, some stacks of hay, and an enormous woodpile, almost as large as the cabin itself.

Such was Barnaby's dwelling place, but let no reader despise it. Other buildings more artistic and more imposing have risen in this western world, but none that has played the part in history that has the humble cabin of the frontier settler. It housed a race of mighty warriors and colonizers. In its shelter, nourished on homely "hog and hominy," grew the bone and sinew that conquered the wilderness westward to the Pacific, overcame the savage, and made the nation what it is.

Cheered by a hospitable smoke that curled above the cabin, they plunged down the snow-covered hillside into the valley. Each man led a lean horse, which staggered under a pack of blankets, axes, and other utensils. Ahead hurried the Irishman; and, in proportion as the distance diminished, his strides grew longer and more rapid.

"Do you think they will see us before we get there?" asked Randolph, with eager interest, when they were within a hundred yards.

Hardly was the question uttered ere the cabin door was thrown open, and a great hound and a little curly-headed boy bounded out and came barking and shrieking in pure delight down the path.

"Daddy! daddy!" the boy cried and threw himself into Barnaby's arms. "You comded back! I'm so glad

you comed back! You must n't go avay and leave your little boy again."

It was a good sight to see. Randolph felt the tears start in his eyes, while Van Braam said heartily:

"A fine little poy! a fine little poy! Dis is vone of dose dimes ven a varrior vishes he had married peen and not a soldier!"

A woman, whose beauty triumphed over the homespun in which she was clad, and a gnarled old oak of a man came hurrying out of the cabin, and likewise fell upon the borderer.

"Barnaby!" the woman cried, as she kissed him, "Barnaby!"

"Praise God you're back, son!" said the old man. "We've been that anxious about you we could hardly work. Ellen's kept the door open so much watchin' for ye that I've the rheumatism dreadful."

"Charles," said Ellen, turning to Randolph, "we are indeed glad to see you. There's been scarce a day since we settled here that Barnaby has n't spoken of you."

Randolph bent over her hand, and then shook that of the old man, who looked his well-knit athletic figure up and down with approving eye.

"Faith, an' five years are after makin' a difference in a lad," he said.

"He was n't too small then to help row a boat," said Barnaby, Senior, with a meaning glance at Ellen.

He then presented Van Braam, who likewise was made to feel that there was no mistake about his welcome.

"Go in be the foire, all of ye," said the grandfather, interrupting their talk. "Oi'll take care of the horses. No, ye can't help me none; ye got to go roight in!"

Thus urged, the travelers were soon gathered round a roaring fire in the fireplace, while Ellen hastened to cook

what she called "a civilized meal." While Barnaby played with the boy and Van Braam with vast content absorbed the grateful heat, Randolph looked round him with interest and called to mind the circumstances that had brought the Currins thither. Barnaby and his father were Scotch-Irishmen, who, unlike most persons included under that name, really had a deal of Irish blood in their veins. Barnaby was born on the "ould sod" four or five years before Randolph saw the light at Eastover; but when he was just beginning to talk, the family joined that great stream of immigration which in the third decade of the century was pouring, thanks to hostile English legislation, from the North of Ireland into the Colonies to become the far-flung skirmish line of the Western Advance. Landing at Philadelphia, the family soon drifted southward to Virginia, where for many years Barnaby's sire worked as blacksmith and miller on the Randolph plantation. Barnaby and Randolph grew up together; and, despite their difference in rank, there was always a close bond of friendship between them — a bond that was all the stronger on Randolph's part because Barnaby once pulled him out of a prospective watery grave in the Potomac.

Five years before our story opens, Barnaby, who was a handsome enterprising young fellow and had "a way with him," had eloped with Ellen Cary, the only child of Major Cary, a neighboring planter. As the Carys were members of the class of "Tuckahoes," or tide-water aristocracy of Virginia, and as Ellen was a great belle in the society that centered about the capital at Williamsburg, the marriage was the talk of the province. The parents of the bride resolutely refused to become reconciled to the match; and Barnaby, his pride and ambition aroused, determined to seek his fortune beyond the wall of the Blue Ridge in the fertile and romantic valley of the Shenandoah. Urged on

by his son's entreaties, the elder Randolph, who was a member of the burgesses, used his influence to obtain for Barnaby a grant of land — a kindness that proved to be one of the last acts of his life. With his wife and rheumatic father Barnaby removed to his new home, but, like most pioneers, was greatly handicapped by lack of funds. Knowing this, Randolph had obtained for him the opportunity to make the trip to the Ohio at a good rate of compensation and thus turn to account the idle winter months.

It was five years since the Currins moved to the valley, and in that time Randolph had not seen any of the family except Barnaby. Having played a prominent part in their elopement, he was curious to discover whether the match was a happy one. That Barnaby would be faithful and considerate Randolph had never doubted, for he came of God-fearing stock and was a man of much natural ability and refinement of character and of more education than his language might seem to indicate. But time and poverty often dull the keen edge of romance, and Randolph had wondered sometimes if Ellen might not come to regret a choice which deprived her of the luxuries and society to which she had been accustomed and condemned her to the monotonous existence of the border. But after seeing the light in her eyes and noting how some invisible power irresistibly brought her every minute near Barnaby's chair, he utterly ceased to feel any weight of responsibility for his part in the match.

He was much pleased to see that the interior of the house and the furniture were very creditable to Barnaby's ambition and energy. Instead of the one room that was usually esteemed enough on the frontier, there were three, besides a loft above that was used for sleeping. Dirt floors, he reflected, were the usual rule; but this cabin had one of whip-sawed lumber. There was also some furniture from

"the settlements." Still, the residence could hardly be called luxurious. The walls were hung with implements of industry and of the chase; sundry hams, bags of seed, and bunches of red peppers were suspended from the ceiling; and a single great fireplace served for heating, lighting, and cooking.

"'T ain't Eastover!" said Barnaby, Senior, apologetically, reading his friend's thoughts.

"It's better than Eastover would be if I had had to build it from the ground up," said Randolph heartily. "Barnaby, you have done nobly!" And he held out his hand.

The child regarded the men unwinkingly, then he drew near Randolph. "I like you!" he said gravely. "I like everybody who likes my daddy."

Presently the father asked: "What's happened, son, since I've been gone?"

"Old Bwindle has a little wed bossy; and ve old black sow has ten little piggies; and a big old b'ar tried to et 'em all up, did n't he, danpa?" cried the boy, his eyes shining.

"That's her hoide nailed out to the side of the barn," answered the old man, who had just come in. "She was the biggest b'ar I iver seed an' that hard to kill it took three bullets to fetch her."

"Were you afraid of the bear?" asked Randolph of the boy.

Barnaby, Junior, hung his head, partly through bashfulness and partly for another reason.

"Tell what you did," said the mother, laughing.

"I cwawled under ve bed," the boy admitted shame-facedly.

"But it was him saw the b'ar first an' tould me to shoot her," said the grandfather, coming to the rescue. "He was

out playin' wid his sled, an' the b'ar made fer him an' might 've ketched him if old Ring had n't nipped her in the flank. Then the old varmint turned to the pig-pen. The sow stood her off till I got there wid me rifle."

Barnaby, Senior, called the hound to him and patted his great head. "Good dog, Ring, good dog!" he said gratefully.

"We've fed him so well ever since that he's getting disgustingly fat," said Ellen, likewise giving the dog a caress.

"He's not so fat yit but what he goes off huntin' ivry noight," said the grandfather, as he threw some more logs on the fire. "There's no kapin' him, except by tyin' him up, an' thin he's after howlin' the whole of the toime."

"Muvver's made you a new huntin'-shirt, daddy," said the boy, evidently anxious to pass on to a subject that would render improbable any recurrence to the episode of the bed. "Put it on, daddy; I want to see you."

He ran into the adjoining room, and presently returned bearing the garment. "Put it on, daddy," he iterated; "I do want to see you."

A backwoods cabin is not a place of conventionalities. To humor the child, and perhaps not unwilling to be rid of the worn and soiled garment he was wearing, Barnaby yielded to the boy's solicitations; and the two retired into the room from which the shirt had been brought. Presently the youngster reappeared pulling his somewhat embarrassed parent after him and crying:

"See daddy now! See daddy wiv his new shirt!"

"Bravo!" Randolph cried, clapping his hands. "Daddy is now the handsomest man in the valley. Ellen, it makes Mr. Van Braam and me feel envious and wish we had wives to make hunting-shirts for us."

The garment was a flowing affair, a sort of loose frock, reaching half-way down the thighs, with large sleeves; it

opened in front and was so wide that it lapped a foot or more over the belt. The cape was cut large, and was fringed with a raveled piece of parti-colored cloth, the main garment being nut-brown in color. Picturesque in itself, the shirt was just what was needed to set off Barnaby's supple athletic figure.

"I think he'll do," Ellen said happily.

"Go on with your blarneyin'!" cried Barnaby gayly; and catching up his son, he began to execute the steps of a Virginia reel.

Supper was presently announced, and all gathered round the table. Ellen had set forth her best; but the plates, cups, saucers, and spoons were of pewter, the knives and forks of iron, and the larger vessels, called trenchers and noggins, were either wooden bowls or gourds.

"Spakin' of beauty," quoth Barnaby, after his father, a devout Presbyterian for all his Irish brogue, had said grace, "spakin' of beauty, Ellen, while I was gone I saw the first lady I ever saw I thought was as pretty as you are."

"La! who was this fair charmer, pray?" Ellen demanded, pretending great concern.

"Ask me friend Charles," said Barnaby. "Who was she, Charles? Spake up now!"

It was now Randolph's turn to blush. "To which one do you refer, Barnaby? To the French serving woman, the Indian squaw Marie, or her Royal Greasiness, Queen Alequippa?"

"What a blow to me!" laughed Ellen, making a wry face.

"Nayther," said Barnaby. "I mean the one ye kipt twistin' yer blessed neck off to catch a last glimpse of as we paddled down sthrame from the fort."

"She vas a peautiful girl, dot vas drue," said Van Braam,

to whom the snow-white hominy, bear steak, johnny cakes, and maple syrup called up the memory of another pleasant occasion. "She vas vone goot cook, too — put no petter dan a laty who in dis house resides," he continued, with a bow to Ellen. "She fed us vell, von all our hearts, from de safages safed us, and vafed us '*bon voyage*' as ve set off. Vy should ve not all our heads dwist off to see de last of such a peauty?"

"Whinever ye want to elope with her, I'm your man, Charles," declared Barnaby, determined to have his joke. "Turn about's fair play, say I. French Creek's not so broad a sthramme as the Potomac, but ye have to evade hair-liftin' Injuns as well as the disthressed parents of the bride. Say the word, me good friend, an' Barnaby's your man."

"I'll call on you when the time comes," Randolph replied, realizing that he might as well enter into the spirit of Barnaby's banter. "Bear witness, all of you, to Barnaby's rash offer."

"I'll be wid ye, me son, be it seed time and harvest all rolled into one," declared Barnaby.

"I'll make a wonderful hunting-shirt for the wedding," said Ellen gayly.

"Oi'll find a fat b'ar for the weddin' feast," said the grandfather.

"And Jacob Van Braam vill all infitations to tinner accept after de vetting is ofer," quoth the Dutchman, with conviction.

It was late that night before all the details of the journey had been related and the family and the travelers were at last in bed — the first real beds the travelers had slept in for many long weeks. It was well that they reached this haven of refuge when they did, for next morning Randolph awoke with a fever and by night was seriously ill.

For a week he grew steadily worse until his condition was truly alarming. Then, when his friends were beginning to despair, the disease spent itself, and he began slowly to improve. But it was apparent that he would be too weak to travel for a considerable time, so, after the patient was out of danger, Van Braam set out for Williamsburg. Three weeks after his departure, Randolph felt that he was strong enough to follow; but the urgent protests of the whole Currin family, including Barnaby, Junior, who was now Randolph's special chum, detained him for another week.

One day towards the end of March, the day before he was to depart, Randolph, accompanied by the little boy and Ring, walked out into the fields where the father and grandfather were working. The budding leaves were beginning to burst from their brown sheaths, and the bluebirds were trilling merrily as they searched for sheltered cavities in which to build their nests. In the brush-encumbered deadening, through which the way led, purple violets were peeping through the grass; and the boy ran hither and thither plucking them. Randolph listened with interest to his prattle. Assuredly he was a likable child, for, though the Old Adam broke out at times, he was withal good-natured, and the general goodness of his little soul was revealed by many of the things he said and did. Already he had won a large place in the man's heart.

"See my booful johnny-jump-ups!" the boy cried presently, holding up his bouquet. "They're for muvver."

"She will love them, I know," said Randolph, and fell to helping pick the flowers. "She loves beautiful things."

"Did she have a boofuller home 'fore she married my daddy?" queried the boy, a train of thought suggested by Randolph's last words.

"Who told you she had?" Randolph asked evasively.

"Danpa. I mean my own danpa. Does you know my other danpa?"

"Yes."

"Is he a bad, bad man?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"He does n't like my daddy. Every good man 'u'd like my daddy. He works to get sings for muvver and me to eat. He makes me sleds and lets me ride on old Nance's back, and does ever so many other sings for me."

They were drawing near the clearing where the grandfather was at work. The old man's axe strokes, as he lopped the limbs from a prostrate tree, rang strong and clear, and he was singing:

"Know that the Lord is God indeed;
Without our aid He did us make;
We are His flock, He doth us feed,
And for His sheep He doth us take."

At intervals he paused in his chopping to throw the detached limbs upon a great pile of blazing brush. Against a stump close by leaned the ever ready rifle, for no man knew what the interminable forest around might hide.

"T is hard labor to win the land, but 't is worth it," the old man said, as he wiped his blackened face. "A bit of stirrin' an' some seed is nigh all it needs to yield a grand crop. There bee n't no sich prime sile beyant them mountains yonder," and he pointed eastward to where the Blue Ridge raised its towering barrier toward the sky.

"T is virgin land indeed," assented Randolph. "Barnaby will have a fine plantation here soine day."

"It'll be after takin' worrk," said the old man, lighting his pipe. "The land has to be chopped out, ye might say. But Barnaby'll do his part, an' there's strength in the old blacksmith yet."

"I'll warrant that from the way you make the chips fly. As I came up I was thinking how we used to watch you at the anvil. You were the strongest man on the plantation. I should n't wonder if you could give any of them a hard tussle yet."

"They was not a bhoy in all Ulster, Oirish or Scotch, who could put me on my back when I was a lad, Charles. But that's gone by. Barnaby has the strength I had in me best days, though, an' is a thought quicker. As fer the land, the valley'll settle up soon, if the Frenchers an' Injuns'll lave us be. Then we'll be after havin' a market for our crops."

"You seem happy enough here now," Randolph ventured.

"We are that. Me little bhoy here's me partner an' kapes me cheerful. Me son an' Ellen have but one throuble."

"What is that?"

"Her folks," the old man said, lowering his voice so that the child, who was playing with the hound, might not hear. "Mind ye, they're not after regrettin' nothin'; but 't is human nature she should want to get reconciled. It troubles me son because it's him that stands in the way. I'm not for blamin' her. The major's a grand man, an' her mother's a grand woman. 'T is natural they should feel as they do. You will raynimber that I was agin it mesilf. I seed the trouble that 'u'd come from it. Howsoever, the match itself's turned out well. Look at that bhoy! Did ye iver see his aquil now? I hope it'll all be made sthright in His good toime. They's good stuff in me bhoy, if I do be sayin' it that should n't."

"You have every reason in the world to be proud of him," Randolph said warmly. "I'm not sorry I helped them across the Potomac."

A look of pride came into the old man's face. "I'm prayin' the day'll come when even Major Richard Cary

of Dunstan Hall 'll not be ashamed of him. I may be in me grave, but it'll come."

Randolph and the boy presently walked to where Barnaby, Senior, was plowing. The ground had never before been broken and was full of stumps and roots, but the soil was a rich black and promised an abundant harvest. A flock of blackbirds were greedily gathering up the uncovered worms. When Randolph and the boy came up, the ploughman paused to chat with them, and pointed out the land that he hoped to clear and bring under cultivation during the next few years.

"T is a grand work such men as you are in," said Randolph, fired by the thought of what these pioneers were doing. "The governor and burgesses at Williamsburg think it's they who are making history. But the men of the Borderland are doing the deeds which historians will chronicle."

"If that's so, it'll kinder even up things," Barnaby said drily. "'T aint much chroniclin' we get now. We're naught but Buckskins."

"Daddy, see that man!" the boy exclaimed.

"Where, son?"

"Vere!" and he pointed toward an approaching horseman.

"Sure, you have the eyes!" said the father proudly.
"You'll be a prime woodsman when you're a man."

The horseman came up at a brisk trot and drew rein. He was roughly dressed, but rode a fine Virginia thoroughbred.

"Be either of ye Mr. Charles Randolph?" he asked.

"I am Charles Randolph."

"Hyer is a letter for ye, then," he said, and, fumbling in his pocket, drew forth the missive.

Randolph took the letter and read it hurriedly. As he did so, a look of eager excitement came into his face.

"Hurrah, 't is from George!" he cried. "He reached Williamsburg safely, and writes that the French reply was deemed so unsatisfactory that Dinwiddie is determined to uphold our title by force of arms. The burgesses have voted ten thousand pounds, and a company of traders and borderers have been sent under Captain Trent to the Forks of the Ohio to complete and hold the fort begun there. Five other companies are being raised. George is lieutenant-colonel, and Joshua Fry, my old teacher of the mathematics in the college, is colonel. George tenders me the captaincy of a company and urges you, Barnaby, to accept a lieutenancy. 'Our orders are sufficiently aggressive,' he says, 'and we may have an opportunity for another interview with Captain R.' Certes, the world has been moving these two months. God save King George! Long life to the burgesses and the Scotch governor!"

"Don't go 'way again, daddy! don't leave your little boy again!" little Barnaby cried tearfully, when he understood the purport of the letter. And he clasped his chubby arms about his father's legs. "Are you goin' 'way again, daddy? The Injuns might get you, daddy! Don't go!"

The father was scarcely less affected. "It grieves me to the bottom of me soul — the thought of leavin' me boy an' home!" he said to Randolph, as he raised the child in his arms. "But I suppose it's me dhuty to go. If we don't dhrive the murderin' divils back to Canaday, they'll be for raisin' all the Injuns, an' then be after crossin' the mountains and treatin' us like they did the folks on the Youghiogheny."

Randolph wisely forbore advising either way. But Barnaby had the blood of two fighting races in his veins. His ancestors had decided for him.

CHAPTER V

QUEBEC MEETS JAMESTOWN

UPON a narrow grass-covered valley that lay between high rugged hills, dusk was falling. In the camp beside the little creek that meandered through the valley, men clad in hunting-shirts — soldiers and yet not soldiers — were eating their evening meal and cursing the pestiferous mosquitoes that swarmed about, singing their war songs in the gloom.

Behind that little army — if a few score men may be called an army — stretched wastes of cliffs and crags uplifting their eternal foreheads to the winds, the sunshine, and the rains; steep ascents cumbered with cyclopean blocks of stone and strewn with daphnes heavy with purple white blooms; forests where the great trees towered aloft till their separate tops were lost in the tangled canopy above, while rank underbrush and rotting logs choked the spaces between the trunks. Ahead lay endless leagues of lonely, wolf-haunted woodland, that covered hills and mountains from crest to river-bed and rolled in somber billows of interminable green to the distant Mississippi and beyond. Through the gray arches of that forest men must walk in a kind of midday gloaming, through an atmosphere now dank and musty with the smell of decaying leaves and logs, now fragrant with the flowers of tulip trees, locusts, grape-vines, honeysuckle, and wild roses.

Down the valley through the tall waving grass hurried a little knot of men. Upon reaching the camp, they paused beside a fire before which sat the Envoy to Fort Le Bœuf.

"Lieutenant Currin, what have you to report?" asked Washington, not without eagerness.

Barnaby dropped the butt of his rifle to the ground and leaned upon the weapon.

"Colonel Washington," said he, "we did n't find so much as a footprint of the imps, but this Injun runner has news."

He pointed to a free-limbed son of the wilderness, clad in full panoply of war.

"Brother, what tidings do you bring?" asked Washington, addressing the warrior.

The warrior stepped forward into the firelight. The flames lit up his painted sinewy body and the barbaric silver ornaments about his arms and in his ears.

"Tanacharison, whom you call the Half-King, and others of your red brothers lie camped at the great spring on the mountain," he said gravely. "Today we came upon the trail of Onontio's warriors. Some of our warriors followed it and found them hidden in a deep valley."

"And what says my brother, the Half-King?"

"His message is: Let the Long Knives join him in the darkness and attack together."

"How many Frenchmen are there?"

The runner indicated on his fingers thirty-two.

For some time the young commander sat silently looking into the fire, as though he hoped to find there the answer to his problem.

"Their weakness explains why they have hung about us so long without attacking," said Captain Randolph presently. "Doubtless they expect reinforcements."

Captain Van Braam crushed a mosquito that had alighted on his fat nose. Then he took a long pull at his great pipe.

"Dose Frenchmens are de most opliging beobles," he

said sagely. "It pegins to look as if ve might vat ve came for find vidout so far going as ve expected."

"T is a grave responsibility — a grave responsibility, gentlemen," said Washington, awakening from his reverie. "The peace of two nations, perhaps of the world, is at stake. It lies with us to precipitate the conflict. If we remain passive, our Indian allies will think we are afraid; and our enemies will wait only for a favorable opportunity."

He paused and glanced inquiringly at the other officers as if inviting their opinions.

"Ambassadors travel upon the open way; they do not lie hidden in thickets," said Randolph, with decision. "We know there are Frenchmen in this region capable of any treachery. Already they have seized our fort at the Forks of the Ohio."

Van Braam nodded his head, and other officers muttered approval of the sentiment.

"So be it, gentlemen," said the young commander, a look of resolution coming into his face. "We will cross the Rubicon. With the help of God we will strike a blow and teach these skulking invaders a lesson. Instead of waiting to be overwhelmed, we will surround them and summon them to surrender. If they resist, let theirs be the consequences!"

A plan was quickly formed. The least hardy of the troops were left to guard the ammunition and baggage. With forty picked men, Washington set out to follow the Indian guide to the Half-King's camp.

"I dread the thrip more than the scrimmage at the end of it," said Barnaby to Randolph, just as the march began. "'T is a rough road to travel even in the daytime; it'll be hell at night!"

A heavy spring rain had begun to fall, and not a ray of light came down from the murky heavens to light their

path. Trees, bushes, roots, and stones impeded the way. The rain pattered dismally upon the leaves, and from afar came the occasional howl of a wolf, the hoot of an owl, or the scream of a cougar. The men bumped into each other or into trees, or slipped on wet slopes and slid and tumbled downward, swearing softly, on the soaking, leafy carpet of the forest. Never was a great war precipitated under stranger circumstances.

In the gray dawn they reached the camp of their allies. The Half-King and a score of warriors, all armed, painted, and dressed, or rather undressed, for war, like so many individual nightmares, received them with guttural exclamations of satisfaction.

"Conotocarious must be an owl to journey on such a night," said the sachem. "We have found the rattlesnake, brother. Shall we wait and let him strike us?"

"Let us crush him with a club ere he has time!" was Washington's answer.

"Listen then, brother. We will destroy him while the morning air makes him sleepy and slow of movement." Making a sketch on the ground with the point of a stick, he continued: "He lies thus in a valley two miles away. Let the Long Knives attack on this side, while their red brothers fall upon the other."

The plan seemed good. Two Indian scouts were sent in advance. The Virginians and their red allies followed in Indian file along the mountainside through the dense laurel thickets.

"What will come of this, think you?" whispered Barnaby to Randolph, as they stole through the forest.

Well might such a question be asked. One of the critical moments of history was at hand. Quebec and Jamestown were met on the slope of Laurel Hill. The peace of the world was about to be broken. The grandest stake

ever contended for as a prize of victory was about to be put to hazard.

"God knows!" said Randolph, awed by the thought of what they were about to do. "Have a care of yourself," he added, laying a friendly hand on the other's arm, for he thought of the cabin in the clearing.

"Sure!" replied the Irishman, returning the pressure. "An' don't you try no foolishness that'll make me the captain of the company!"

Presently the Half-King and his warriors, save one who remained with the white men to act as guide, filed off to the left. The Virginians crept steadily onward down the mountainside until some of the foremost came out upon a ledge of rock overlooking a little valley. A stone, dislodged by a careless foot, went tumbling down the slope. At the sound a man clad in uniform of white with black facings started up from a log and cast a hurried glance about him.

"*Qui vive!*!" he called, not perceiving the figures peering down upon him.

"Surrender, in the name of King George!" shouted Van Braam in French.

The sentinel looked upward and saw his enemies.

"*Aux armes! aux armes! les Anglais!*!" he shrieked, and, instead of complying with the summons, slipped behind a tree.

Instantly the valley behind him was a scene of animation. Half-clad forms came tumbling out of improvised shelters of bark and leafy boughs, and, seizing upon weapons, sank behind logs and trees; while two voices shouted out sharp hurried orders.

It was evident that there would be no surrender unless it was forced, and that in a moment the advantage of surprise would be lost.

"Fire!" shouted Washington, himself setting the example. A volley of rifle-shots rang out from along the ledge. Three or four Frenchmen were seen to fall, but the survivors responded in kind, and a Virginian standing near Randolph dropped his rifle and went tumbling over the ledge. A moment later a shrill quavering whoop sounded from up the valley, and Half-King and his warriors poured in a heavy volley. Surprised and taken between two fires, some of the French threw down their guns and called for quarter.

"Forward!" ordered Washington.

In a confused manner the men scrambled down the ledge, with Washington, Van Braam, Randolph, and Barnaby leading. A number of shots were fired at them; one or two men fell wounded; but the rest rushed on and began disarming their opponents. Some resisted. A hand-to-hand struggle took place. A Canadian ran up behind Barnaby and struck with his clubbed rifle; but Randolph turned the weapon aside with his sword, and then, threatening the Canadian with the point, forced him to yield. By this time the fight was over, save at one point down the valley, where a single Frenchman was defending himself against four Virginians.

Randolph saw at a glance that it was Reparti. The giant captain was but half dressed; his gun was empty; the blood was flowing down his face from a wound in his head. His opponents had clubbed their guns; but with his sword he threatened first one and then the other with wonderful agility, retreating the while, and kept all at bay.

"Take him alive!" shouted Randolph, hurrying toward the scene of encounter.

The Canadian heard the voice and seemed to recognize it. With a yell of defiance he rushed at one of his antagonists and ran him through the body. Before he could clear

his weapon, the three other Virginians closed in and grappled with him. All four went crashing to the ground. For a moment it seemed that Reparti was inevitably taken, for the men who had seized him were sinewy frontiersmen, accustomed to the rough and tumble encounters of the border. But they were no match for the strongest man in all New France. With a roar like that of a bull of Bashan, the Frenchman rose to his feet, hurled one of his antagonists down the slope, dashed another against a tree, and, seizing a rifle, brought the stock down with withering force upon the head of the third. Randolph, Barnaby, and a dozen others came running up; but, throwing the barrel of the broken weapon at the nearest, Reparti sprang with the quickness of a panther into a thicket, and, heedless of a volley of shots, dashed off through the forest, shouting back as he went:

“Je m’en irai, mais je reviendrai! — I go, but I shall come again!”

A dozen Virginians leaped after him, but soon all returned.

“We ‘uns mought jist as well try to ketch a wild hoss!” said the most persistent of them apologetically to Randolph.

Of all the Frenchmen, Reparti alone had escaped. Ten of their number lay dead among the trees, and ere Washington had time to interfere, as many scalps were dangling from the belts of Half-King’s warriors. Quebec and Jamestown had met, and for the moment Jamestown was victor.

It was a triumphant moment; and yet, as Randolph looked down upon the fallen, he could not help reflecting that, though Frenchmen and enemies, they were the countrymen of Alfred de Saint-Pierre.

CHAPTER VI

THE LISTENER

MONTHS had come and gone. The children of the wilderness had rallied beneath the fleur-de-lis; and to the beating of a single drum the little band we left victorious on the slope of Laurel Hill had sadly taken up their homeward march along the wilderness road from Fort Necessity, leaving not an English banner floating in the vast Ohio Valley on which they turned their backs. Reparti had made good his boast; but it had been given to that defeated and dispirited band to strike the first blow in a conflict which was to be fought out, not only in the forests of America, but on the plains of Germany, in far away Bengal, and on most of the Seven Seas — a war that was to settle the long mooted question of colonial and commercial supremacy, was to decide the mastery of the North American continent, and was to prepare the way for another war, still more important in the annals of mankind, in which their young leader was to be the central figure.

The summer had drawn to a close, and the verdure of the savannahs and of the forest had undergone an ominous transformation. Touched by the late September frosts, the wilderness glowed like a bed of giant tulips; and along the lonely banks of creeks and rivers the painted foliage, brightened by the autumnal sun, reflected its colors in the dusky water below. The falling leaves covered the earth with a golden fleece more wonderful than

that sought by Jason and the Argonauts; the summer birds were taking their southward flight, while long files of wild fowl from the lonely lakes and fens of the magic Northland were beginning to stream across the sky. Yet the air was still mild and pleasant, and only now and then did a gust of chill wind give added warning that a melancholy change was at hand.

On an uprooted tree which lay in fallen majesty upon the river bank a short distance above Fort Le Bœuf, sat Alfrede de Saint-Pierre, pensively gazing at this autumnal magnificence. Presently, after a glance about her, she slipped from her bodice a letter and read as follows:

“FORT NECESSITY, VIRGINIA,
“4 July, 1754.

“MY DEAR MADEMOISELLE,— This will be delivered to you by Captain Van Braam, who is to act as a Hostage for the return of certain Prisoners taken by us — Major Stobo being the other.

“I can almost find it in my heart to envy him; for, sooner probably than even you imagined, your Prophecy has come true, and Yesterday I was forced to yield to the Valor of your Countrymen but without having in Prospect the Consolation which I mentioned at our last Meeting. I shall not trouble you with the Details of our Undoing, for these doubtless you will have learned Elsewhere before this reaches you. We can only plead *fortune de guerre*.

“I foresee, Mademoiselle, a long and bloody War between our Nations. The first Years of this War may bring great Suffering and Trouble to our Frontier Inhabitants. I think I need not ask you to do what you can to soften the Horrors that the Employment of the Savages will inevitably involve and to alleviate the hard Lot of any Captives who may be brought your Way. I promise, on my Part, to do all that I can for any French Prisoners whom we may be fortunate enough to capture.

"Please pay my Compliments to your good Father, the Chevalier. I need scarcely add that I send my best Wishes to you also. I think often of you and of the great Kindness that secured our Safety. 'T is my bitterest Regret that Circumstances have made us Enemies for the Present. My sole Consolation is that I still recall the Biblical Injunction and trust that you have not forgotten it. Adieu, Mademoiselle. These are perilous Times; and when I think of you almost alone in this great Wilderness, I pray that good Angels may have you in their Keeping.

"Your most humble and obedient Servant,
"CHARLES RANDOLPH,
"Captain in the Provincial Forces of Virginia."

As she finished the last lines, she heard footsteps, and, looking up, perceived the chevalier approaching along the path that led from the fort. In a twinkling the letter disappeared from sight, and she was beckoning him to a seat beside her.

"Dreaming?" he asked, as he sat down.

"Of this adorable beauty," she answered airily, with a wave of her hand at the golden forest. "What a pity that in a few short days all will have vanished! Piercing raw winds will drive away this dreamy haze; the shriveled leaves will be snatched from the trees; chill rains will be drizzling down upon the gloomy clearing; snowflakes will come sifting through the bare treetops; the Indians will be shivering in their tattered blankets; and the long and dreary winter will be upon us. Oh, father, why cannot spring and autumn last forever!"

The chevalier smiled a quiet smile. "Before that change comes, Alfred, would you like to be far from this wilderness?" he asked.

The girl looked hard into his face. "Father, quickly! What is it?" she demanded imperiously, seizing him by the arm.

The chevalier caught a leaf that was floating past them, and looked with feigned interest at its gorgeous coloring. "If you could have one wish, *petite*, what would you wish for?" he asked, with provoking slowness.

"That you should be restored to a position suited to your talents, *mon cher papa*," she cried, without hesitation.

The father's face glowed. He kissed his daughter. "How good you are, *ma chérie!*" he cried. "*Eh bien*, the wish is granted — that is, if I deserve a better position. I have been summoned to Quebec. I am to be second in command next year about Lakes Champlain and Sacrament."

"*A la bonne heure!* That will be glorious! I mean our going to Quebec. But I shall dread the day when the campaign opens, and you must leave me. I am glad that now real danger threatens, even your enemies dare no longer leave you buried in the wilderness."

"Yes, it solves a problem," he said thoughtfully. "I could not bear to have you leave me; you are all I have, *petite*, to keep me from gloomy thoughts. Yet it troubled me to have you stay. Not even a party of English envoys will visit the fort this year. You would miss that diversion."

"Father!" she cried, blushing. "But when do we start?"

"It is all arranged. You are to leave for Presqu'isle day after tomorrow. Unfortunately I must visit on my way a Delaware village far to the eastward. But I will send a squad of soldiers and Sergeant Gerard to guard you, and you will have Jeanne and Marie for companions. I will join you there, and we will go by canoe to Niagara and so on as we come up."

"Doubtless I shall have a gay time in Quebec — Toi-

nette la Vallière seems to have," Alfrede remarked presently. "She speaks of so many conquests that I fear she is fast becoming a coquette. Yet I shall miss the woods sometimes. I have been happy here with you, only I grew tired of the long winter. I would rather be with you here than be the toast of all the beaux of London and Paris."

"Demoiselles must have their opportunities," said the chevalier teasingly. "They must win the admiration of others besides sachems and bushrangers. In Quebec are many gay cavaliers."

"And think you it will be in Quebec that I shall meet the Prince you torment me about?" she asked quizzically.

"*Sans doute*. 'Who is the ravishing young creature who carries herself with the air of a wood nymph?' will be the cry when you appear. The beaux, young and old, will swarm around to pay their homage like flies around a honey pot. *Hélas!* I shall soon lose my Alfrede, I fear."

"Nonsense, father, you are silly sometimes!" she cried gayly.

"T is well on another account that you are going," he said more soberly. "Behind the seeming calm of this fascinating wilderness lurks danger. Force is the only law her subjects obey. Even now we know not what eyes may be upon us. More than once have I lain awake at night, *ma chérie*, thinking of what might befall you were some accident to strike me down. Now that war has come, the hazard is tenfold greater. The English will not rest content with their repulse. They are a slow race but determined. Did not Captain Randolph in his letter, written in the very moment of defeat, speak of a long war? Yes, they will come again; and these primeval solitudes will witness some bloody deeds, I fear."

"Think you it will be safer at Quebec?"

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"I trust so. New France is weak; *mon Dieu*, few know how weak! But for sixty years the waves of invasion have beaten against her in vain. I hope that we shall weather the storm yet again, and certainly Quebec on her frowning rock will hold out long beyond these little stockade forts in the wilderness. When she is lost, all is lost. But, a truce to prophecy! I have some affairs to which I must attend, and you will want to give directions for your packing."

He rose from the log, and with a courtly air gave his hand to his daughter. Then they strolled back along the forest path toward the fort, Alfrede humming one of those endless *chansons à l'aviron*, or boat songs, of the *voyageurs*, known as "The White Rose":

"Wherever I go I never see
A maiden so fair, it seems to me,
As the beautiful rose of the white rose-tree.
And the nightingale sings from his dusky bough:
'Marry her, marry her, marry her now!
The snow white maid, so fair to see,
The beautiful rose of the white rose-tree.'

"But how can I wed with the beautiful flower,
The beautiful rose of the white rose-tree?
My father is angry, my mother is dour.
Still the nightingale sings from his dusky bough:
'Marry her, marry her, marry her now!
The snow white maid so fair to see,
The beautiful rose of the white rose-tree.'"¹

But the place had not been left a solitude. When the song had grown faint in the distance, an Indian warrior

¹ The song is a *very* free translation. One version of the original is as follows:

*"Je n'ai pas trouvé personne
Que le rossignol chantant la belle rose,
La belle rose du rosier blanc!"*

half raised himself from behind a clump of alders which grew a few paces from where the two had been seated, and, parting the branches peered exultantly after them. When they were out of sight, he stood upright and stepped into the open, disclosing a figure that was short and squat and a face that was disfigured with horrible scars.

*Qui me dit dans son langage
Marie-toi, car il est temps, à la belle rose,
A la belle rose du rosier blanc !
Comment veux-tu que je me marie avec la belle rose,
La belle rose du rosier blanc ?
Mon père n'est pas content de la belle rose,
De la belle rose du rosier blanc !
Ni mon père, ni ma mère,
Ni aucun de mes parents,
La belle rose," and the rest.*

CHAPTER VII

IN THE WILDERNESS LODGE

AFTER satisfying himself that no one had seen him, the warrior set off through the forest northwestward. Gray squirrels barked at him from the tops of shaggy nut-laden hickories. Partridges whirred up from beneath his feet. A band of startled deer led by a noble buck plunged with waving white flags into a thicket. Once a surly bear lumbered heavily across his path. He heeded none of these, but kept on with the same untiring pace mile after mile until shortly after nightfall he surmounted a hill beyond which stretched away farther than the eye could see a glimmering waste of gently heaving water. Descending the hill, he came presently to an Indian village with a few score wigwams.

When he entered the village, the fires over which the evening meal had been prepared had sunk into dull beds of embers; the council-house was in darkness; but in an opening among the trees there glowed a lively blaze around which a party of young braves and squaws were dancing a courting dance to the accompaniment of drum and *chichikoue*, while other denizens of the village were gathered about to look on. Here were tried warriors, naked save for breech-clout, fringed leggings, and moccasins, who spent their days idly smoking and laughing, playing the gambling game of plum-stones, bandying obscene jests, and telling doubtful stories of their exploits on the war trail; youthful

gallants, bedizened with all the foppery of beads, feathers, bracelets, hawk's bells, and necklaces of bear's claws, but held as yet in light esteem because they had never torn a gory trophy from the head of a fallen foe; wanton young damsels, versed in all the arts of forest coquetry, radiant with sunflower and bear's oil, with long greasy black locks, silver and copper nose and ear pendants, necklaces of beads and wampum, and ruffles soiled with dirt and gaudy with vermillion; shriveled hags, with spindling shanks and the voices of screech owls; and troops of half-naked children, with beady mischievous eyes — true imps of the forest. The rising flames illumined the rough clearing and cast a red glare upon the dusky boughs of the surrounding forest and upon the barbaric ornaments, bedaubed faces, and contorted limbs of the dancers.

With scarce a glance at the merrymakers, the warrior stalked past them to a lodge larger than the others, and, opening the door-flap of skins, without any warning of his coming, stepped inside and squatted down upon a bearskin.

A single candle, one of the few articles of civilized manufacture in the lodge, lit up the interior dimly and revealed a young Indian woman hardly more than a girl, a boy just able to walk, and a giant Frenchman who was dressed in the Indian fashion and half reclined upon a buffalo robe, lazily smoking a pipe, the long stem of which was ornamented with tufts of feathers from the scarlet tanager. The woman, who had risen as the sachem entered, wore a "machicote," a sort of petticoat, of green silk, edged with a fringe of yellow, blue, and red ribbons, and over this a gay varicolored blanket of soft wool; her forearms bore heavy bracelets of gold, and in her hair was an ornament of the same metal. Her form was well moulded, her oval face was beautiful, and her movements lithe and graceful. The boy was dressed as a miniature warrior, and resembled

her, though his lighter skin showed that in his veins the blood of two races was commingled.

"Le Chat is welcome," the Frenchman said, after a moment's glance. "Saki, set food before the sachem."

The squaw hastened to bring succotash, cooked venison, and bear's flesh on platters of bark, and placed the repast on the ground before the warrior. Without ceremony, he fell upon the food, using no other implements than those which nature had given him.

"Does my brother bring news?" asked the Frenchman, when the warrior had at last satisfied his hunger and had wiped his hands upon his blanket.

"Ugh!" was the answer, in tones that implied an affirmative. "The Gray-Hair and the young squaw will set forth after two risings of the sun."

"Know you this for more than idle chatter?" the Frenchman demanded, in tones that showed keen interest.

"Le Chat lay like a lynx beside the path. He heard with his own ears the Gray-Hair speak the words."

"How go they?"

"By different trails. The Gray-Hair by the village of the Delawares; the young squaw by the straight path with a squad of soldiers to guard her."

"Ha!" the Frenchman exclaimed, springing to his feet, "so my plan for tolling away the father on a bootless errand bids fair to succeed. Our brother, the Delaware sachem, has shown himself cunning in his message. It is a great step. But what now?"

For some time he stood with his shaggy brows knotted in thought. From without came the rattle of the *chichikoue*, the barbaric boom of the drum, and the discordant shouts of the dancers. The woman watched him wistfully; even the impassive warrior stole a glance or two at his face.

At last he seemed to come to a resolve. Seating himself beside the sachem, he began in the Ottawa tongue to give what seemed to be directions, speaking slowly and more than once repeating what he had said. As he talked, the child lay down upon a couch of skins and quickly dropped asleep, but the young mother, seated beside him, bent forward to catch the low-spoken words, and into her eyes there presently came a look of terror. At last the sachem rose to go.

"A new gun and three blankets shall be the reward of each warrior," said the Frenchman, likewise rising. "At the end of another summer, if no one has wagged his tongue like a woman, the reward shall be doubled."

"It is well," said the sachem in French. "Le Chat understands. The words of Bras-de-Fer shall be law to him. At sunset all shall be ready."

Lifting the flap of skins, he silently withdrew and betook himself to his own lodge.

For a long time after his departure the girl sat silent; then, rising from the couch, she drew nearer the Frenchman, who was again reclining on the buffalo skin. Pointing with her hand at the child, she said in a musical voice:

"Thy son sleeps."

"I see," the Frenchman said apathetically, and continued to fill his pipe with tobacco.

"Is he not growing into a fine young warrior?"

"No doubt." The answer still betrayed no interest.

"Since my lord commands at Venango instead of Presqu'-isle, his son has almost forgotten his father."

"The path is long to the village."

"But the village could be moved nearer."

"The Long Knives are busy. Bras-de-Fer would not have them slay his son."

"But my lord said yesterday that the Long Knives

feared to climb the mountains. Until a winter ago he wanted Sàki near him in time of danger."

The man vouchsafed no reply; a long silence fell. Then the girl asked haltingly: "What would my lord with *Wah-be-gran-nee*, the White Lily?"

The Frenchman looked at her curiously, but said nothing.

"Is it that he wishes her to hoe his corn, dress his food, and bear his children?"

"Suppose he does?"

For an instant her form quivered. Then she drew nearer and looked yearningly into his face. "Has Sàki grown so old and ugly that her lord no longer cares for her? Sometimes she has thought that he found delight in her and that she was pleasing to him. He used to call her his woodland fawn, but he uses the name no more."

"Nay, thou art as beautiful as ever."

"Then why does my lord wish the pale-face squaw?"

It was dawning upon the Frenchman that here was a factor he had not considered, but he reflected that she was only an Indian. "Hast thou not seen that when I have worn a pair of moccasins for a time, I throw them aside and put on a new pair? Let that be thy answer."

"But my lord said that Sàki is as beautiful as ever," she protested, her lips twitching pitifully.

"Nay, then, if thou must have the reason," said he, beginning to be exasperated with her persistence, "it is that Sàki is an Indian, *une peau-rouge*; the time has come when Bras-de-Fer would mate with one of his own color, and give up the life of a *courieur-de-bois*."

The girl was silent for a time, then resolved upon a last effort. "Dost thou remember," she began in a tone that was belied by the look of terror in her eyes, "how three summers ago thou didst first see Sàki dancing at Michilimackinac? I had been taught by the Black-Robes and

was not a wanton like the others. On the same day thou didst buy me of my father for a gun and a keg of *eau-de-vie*. In a birchen canoe light as the down on the breast of the humming-bird we glided over the blue water to an island where the beaches were white as the snow in midwinter and where sweet-smelling pines made ceaseless murmuring. Dost thou remember the knife which thou didst find hidden in the maiden's bosom? She meant to slay thee. On the island we reared a wigwam, and there the maiden grew to love where at first she had only feared. Sàki thou didst call her, which means love, and the time spent there was all too short. The summer passed and the winter; and when my lord came to the wigwam beside the Detroit, he heard another voice, small as that of the young bird when he asks for food. Sàki again thou didst call the mother, and swore thou wouldest never love another, not even one of thine own blood."

"Aye," said Reparti, laughing harshly, "but that was yesterday, when I had seen only thee. Does the young warrior mean all that he whispers in the maiden's ear in the dance? But grieve not. Thy son and thee shall not want. Perchance I shall still visit thee sometimes."

"Then Sàki's happiness is past. She cannot share thy love with another!" the girl cried; and, crouching down upon the floor, burst into a fit of tearless sobbing. The child, wakened by his mother's voice, added his wails to hers.

For a long time Reparti sat regarding the two, perhaps not entirely unmoved. Once he half rose as if to go to her, but the impulse quickly passed. This was not the first time he had discontinued an inconvenient savage alliance. Presently he arose and passed out of the lodge into the night.

The fires had died out. The village slept. All was silence

save for the mournful call of a whip-poor-will and the occasional weird cry of a loon far out upon the lake. The sky was cloudless; and the North Star, Orion, and the Pleiades looked down upon him as they still look down upon the sons of men. But his thoughts were not of these evidences of a great God's handiwork.

"We shall see," he muttered to the chill air, "if made-moiselle will scorn her rescuer as she scorned her suitor. If she does, she will still be in my hands. I know how to keep my warriors silent, and the allies of the English will be blamed for all. Like Saki, she may come to love where at first she only hates and fears."

CHAPTER VIII

THE CAPTIVES

THE sun rising above a wilderness of hills and forest found Alfrede de Saint-Pierre upon the bastion from which nine months before she had waved adieu to the English envoys.

"*Au revoir, my great trees, with your adorable silence, au revoir!*" she cried.

With a last glance down the river, she threw a kiss at the golden forest in that direction, and hurried to the quarters, where old Jeanne, Marie, and a squad of four soldiers were waiting to set out. The little party, all on foot, passed through the great wooden gate of the stockade and took the forest road for Presqu'isle. The baggage had been sent ahead the day before, and their march was almost unencumbered; still the task before them was no light one, for a walk of a dozen miles over a rough road is no small undertaking for a woman, be she ever so young and vigorous.

But the journey had no terrors for the joyous girl. "Do not concern yourself for me, Jeanne," she said to the solicitous old *bonne*. "'T is you who needs commiseration. Here, give me that bag you are carrying. *Ciel!* I need the exercise. I'm growing stout, I fear. The prospect is delightful — the journey, I mean. When we have gone two leagues and a half, we will have our bread and a bottle of wine, rest awhile, and reach the fort happy and strong long before sunset. Is it not a good plan of campaign, Gerard?"

The grizzled old sergeant, who had been a member of Saint-Pierre's company during all the score of years that his wife Jeanne had been a servant in the chevalier's household, looked at her admiringly.

"Perfect, mademoiselle. Maréchal Saxe never made a better one," he said.

"How content I should be if father were only with us. But our brave Gerard will keep off the wolves and bears and *serpents à sonettes* — ugh, how I hate to hear their rattle! There is nothing else to dread; let us enjoy our holiday. Not even the palace of Versailles approaches the beauty of the woods around us."

It did indeed bid fair to be a blithesome journey. The air was just cool enough to be bracing; and the narrow road, cut the previous year, led through aisles of magnificent trees, from which leaves crimsoned by the Midas-touch of frost were fluttering down to earth. Alfrede fairly bubbled over with delight, exclaiming gleefully whenever some leaf more than usually gorgeous caught her eye, and making little excursions into the woods to gather nuts, black haws, and the delicious wild grapes that grew here and there in great profusion.

"*Mon Dieu!* Gerard," exclaimed Jeanne, when the girl was on one such excursion, "Is she not magnificent? A grand dame, yet such a child also! Each day she grows more beautiful, more charming."

The old soldier sighed. "If *le Bon Dieu* had spared our little one, I would have wished her thus," he said.

"*Eh bien*, she seems almost ours. I love her as much."

"And I love you—both of you, dearly! dearly!" cried the girl, slipping from out a thicket whence she had overheard their talk. "What should I do without my good *bonne* and my brave Gerard?"

"May the Saints have you in their keeping, *mon enfant*," said Gerard.

"See what I have found!" the girl exclaimed, after a little pause, holding out her hands filled with plump brown chestnuts. "Are they not beauties? They call up the visit we made with father's comrade, the Marquis de Montcalm, at Candiac the last autumn I had *maman*, Gerard. Jeanne was with us. She can tell you about the pleasant old château among the hills of Languedoc, about the mulberry trees, the olive grove, the chestnut trees! The chestnuts were falling, and we children helped to pick them. What a family there was, Jeanne!— six children, yet the good marquis had a place in his heart for each and not least of all for poor Mirète, who was sickly. I wish that all French noblemen were like him instead of being the vain idle creatures who swarm about the court."

"T was as you say," said Jeanne, "a charming spot, a pleasant home. The marquis and your father are what Frenchmen ought to be."

Talking thus, the little party entered a deep valley where the large timber was partly supplanted by thickets of bushes and noxious weeds.

"This is a place," said Gerard, "through which I should tremble to pass if we had enemies to fear. But since there are none within a hundred leagues —"

He did not finish. He was never even able to remember what his last words had been, for at that instant a score of hideously painted savages sprang with frightful yells out of the thicket on both sides of the road.

"*Les Iroquois!*!" shrieked the soldiers.

There was no time for any concerted action. Gerard managed to knock one of his assailants prostrate with a blow of his fist, but ere he could draw his sword three others sprang upon him and overpowered him. While the other soldiers were endeavoring to cock their heavy fusils, they, too, were hurled to the ground; their weapons were torn

from their grasp; their hands were tied tightly with thongs of rawhide. The women were then seized. Before the travelers had time to realize that they had been attacked, all were prisoners.

"What would you with us?" Alfrede demanded, first in French and then in English, not forgetting even in that dreadful moment that she was a soldier's daughter. "There is no war declared between Onontio and the warriors of the Long House. Why then do you seize Onontio's children?"

But the captors pretended not to understand. They stripped the soldiers of what few objects of value they possessed, and some had greedily begun to handle with greasy fingers the chain of gold which Alfrede wore, when a sharp rebuke from the chief of the party caused them to give over their thievish intentions.

The chief then made signs for the prisoners to follow him, adding emphasis to the command by laying his hand upon his tomahawk. Resistance was out of the question, so, with heavy hearts, the prisoners quitted the road along which they had just been traveling so blithely, and in single file followed their captives through the forest eastward.

"Oh, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" moaned the wretched old sergeant, "to think that I should have allowed ourselves to be surprised thus! Mademoiselle, I was unworthy of your good father's trust!"

"Do not let that weigh upon your mind, good Gerard," the girl replied bravely. "The fault was not yours nor any one's. God in His inscrutable wisdom has decreed that we should suffer; let us yield ourselves to His will and blame no one. Perhaps they will merely keep us prisoners until we can be redeemed."

Gerard shook his grizzled head sadly. "*Hélas!* mademoiselle, it is evident that you do not know the Iroquois,"

he said. "Since the Sieur de Champlain fought with them four generations ago they have never let slip an opportunity to be revenged upon a Frenchman. The demons of hell are saints of heaven compared with them!"

But Alfrede was determined not to despair. "We will pray to the Virgin to soften their hearts," she said hopefully. "Perhaps they will not be so cruel. I have heard that of late years they have lost some of their old hatred of us."

Her words set Gerard to thinking. "'T is true that these warriors do not behave so cruelly as Iroquois usually do," he said reflectively. "'T is their usual custom immediately to gnaw or beat off a prisoner's finger-nails as the first step in the torture. Thus far —"

But the chief gave him a vigorous prod with the muzzle of his gun and by unmistakable signs ordered him to keep silent. There was no prospect of gaining anything by persisting, so the old soldier obeyed. For two or three hours the prisoners walked in almost total silence through the forest. At last the party reached a spring that bubbled out of a rocky hillside, and the chief threw himself down upon the ground as a signal that his warriors might refresh themselves. To lessen the danger of discovery, they lighted no fires, but made a meal of some smoked bear meat they carried with them and of the provisions captured with the prisoners, allowing the latter to partake of everything but the wine, which they divided only among themselves, cursing meanwhile because there was not more. The meal finished, the captors held a short conference, at the conclusion of which six warriors, including the chief, detached themselves from the rest and approached Alfrede.

"*Venez donc,*" the chief ordered, for the moment forgetting himself and speaking in French. And he laid a tawny hand upon her arm.

"Surely you cannot mean to separate us!" she cried, for the first time on the verge of tears.

But again the Indians pretended not to understand.

"Let me stay with my friends," she pleaded, throwing herself upon her knees. "My father, the Chevalier de Saint-Pierre, will reward you! God himself will reward you!"

It was useless. With a gesture of impatience, the chief pulled the girl to her feet with a violence that made her cry out with pain.

"May *le diable* fly away with you!" cried Gerard, fiercely straining at the thongs which rendered him helpless. "If for one moment I had a fusil in my hands, you would die for that, were I burned the next instant!"

His struggles and protests, however, were as useless as were the lamentations of his good wife and the angry cries of Marie. Seeing that resistance was hopeless, Alfrede followed her captors, calling back as she disappeared among the trees:

"Adieu! adieu! May God care for you! Should you ever see my father, give him a daughter's love and tell him that my last thoughts were of him."

When they were out of hearing of the other captives, her captors talked freely in a language the girl did not understand, but obstinately refused to answer any of the questions she put to them. Knowing the savage reputation of the Iroquois, she gave herself up as one without hope, and fervently prayed that nothing worse than death might befall her.

Hour after hour they journeyed thus through the magic forest. The shadows of the great trees lengthened. In the denser fastnesses the twilight beneath the over-arching tops grew ever deeper. At last the party came to a rapid creek upon whose bank was a little clearing in which

stood the deserted remains of some hastily constructed wigwams.

Here the warriors halted. At first Alfrede believed they had decided to spend the night upon the spot. She was cheered by a faint hope that perhaps she might be followed and rescued. But, after resting and talking for some time, her captors, when the sun was still the breadth of a man's hand above the horizon, began to pile dry branches about a near-by sapling.

There was no mistaking the meaning of such preparations. The captive fell upon her knees and raised her fair young face to the sky.

Presently the chief approached and seized her by the arm. She had bravely done her best to prepare herself to meet her fate with fortitude, but she was only a young girl to whom life was sweet and dear. Instinctively she resisted and uttered a low and piteous cry. Her terror had no effect upon the hardened savage. Grasping with relentless hand her long flowing hair, he began to drag her toward the stake.

But he was destined never to accomplish his purpose. Scarcely had the helpless girl taken one step to follow him, when from a neighboring thicket came the whip-like report of a rifle. The iron hand loosened its brutal grasp; its owner staggered backward, a tiny stream of blood gushing from his painted breast; the fierce expression in his eyes changed to one of dull vacancy; and with a hollow groan he fell upon the crimson leaves at the feet of the captive.

CHAPTER IX

'TWIXT THE CUP AND THE LIP

THE band stood aghast at this unexpected visitation upon one of their number. They had scarcely time to glance in the direction from which the fatal bullet had come when three other shots rang out, and two more savages fell writhing in death agonies.

"Have at the bloody devils!" shouted a voice which Alfrede recognized with a cry of glad surprise; and a lithe form clad in a fringed hunting-shirt came leaping into the open. He was closely followed by three frontiersmen, similarly attired, all wildly brandishing their weapons.

At this apparition one of the remaining warriors darted away into the forest in flight swift and silent as an eagle's shadow. The two others, more courageous, sprang toward their guns, which they had incautiously placed against a tree a little distance from the sapling. The first to secure his weapon was almost a giant in size; but, had he been the Prince of Darkness himself, he must have gone down before the fiery onrush of the enraged young leader. One furious thrust of the white man's sword he managed to turn aside with his gun, which he was endeavoring to cock; but a second caught him fair in the breast, and he sank to earth a dead man.

"Take that, ye red varmint!" exclaimed a second rescuer, bringing the barrel of his heavy rifle down upon the head of the remaining warrior.



“‘ You see that Virginians are not always made prisoners,
Mademoiselle,’ said he, smiling.” *Page 85*

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The other borderers sprang away in pursuit of the fugitive, but soon gave up the chase as hopeless. Meanwhile their leader ran to where Alfrede, unaccustomed to scenes of bloodshed and overcome by the sudden change in her fortune, was swaying like a willow in the breeze. Taking her in his arms, he encouraged and confforted her with such success that presently the color came back into her face. She gently tried to free herself. A bolder man might have deemed further comforting necessary, but the young soldier yielded to what seemed to be her wish.

"You see that Virginians are not always made prisoners, mademoiselle," said he, smiling.

"I thank God for it, Captain Randolph!" she cried unsteadily. "You were just in time to save me. Heaven was good to me. But how did you happen to be here so opportunely?"

"Providence willed it," he said happily. "Lieutenant Currin and I, with these two scouts, are on a reconnoitering expedition. This morning from across the river we inspected the defenses of Fort Le Bœuf. We saw you upon the bastion, and I swear that I would have given a thousand pounds to have crossed the river to you."

"Make it five thousand, an' you'll be nearer the truth, Charles," drawled Barnaby, who, after making sure that the barrel of his rifle had not been bent by its collision with the Indian's head, had been watching the little scene with a quizzical look on his face. "It's a fact, miss, I had to hold him — lay violent hands on my superior officer — to kape him from swimmin' over!"

The girl smiled. "*Ciel!*" she exclaimed, with a return of her accustomed roguery, "Captain Randolph must be very extravagant to be willing to pay so much for so little!"

"I did not know then that you were about to leave the fort and that I should soon have the opportunity of talk-

ing to you without its costing a sixpence," said Randolph, with a fierce look at his lieutenant.

"But how did you learn of my captivity?" she inquired, with interest.

Randolph explained at considerable length that Barnaby had discovered the trail of the Iroquois and that while they were examining the evidences of the struggle a frantic young squaw had appeared who said that Mademoiselle Alfrede had been taken prisoner. The Virginians had followed the trail to where the captors ate their midday meal. There the squaw had discovered signs showing which party Alfrede was with, and had urged them to follow and rescue her, saying that she knew where some of her own people were camped in the direction taken by the other party, that she would find them and send them in pursuit.

"I pray that she may succeed," Alfrede said earnestly. "But I wonder who she could have been. It was not Marie, for she is old; besides, she was one of the captives."

"No," said Randolph, "it was not Marie. She was young and beautiful. Her last words were that we must by all means rescue you before sunset."

At this juncture Barnaby stepped forward and touched his cap apologetically.

"I beg pardon for interruptin'," he said; "but don't you think, captain, we ought to be after movin'? That imp who escaped may be for bringin' some more of the spal-peens on us."

"T is a wise suggestion, but what are we to do with mademoiselle?" said Randolph, much puzzled.

"She is now *your* prisoner. Take her with you to Vir-ginny." There was a twinkle in the speaker's eyes that was not lost on either the captain or Alfrede.

"That is a still wiser suggestion," said Randolph, blush-

ing and not daring to meet the girl's eyes. "What say you to the suggestion, mademoiselle?"

"But what would my poor father do?" cried the girl, in what Randolph took to be great alarm.

Barnaby failed to be much impressed.

"True. Of course, I was only jesting," said Randolph hurriedly. "We will escort you wherever you wish, mademoiselle. You were on your way to Presqu'isle, were you not? Do you prefer that post?"

"I fear that I shall be leading you into fresh danger," the girl said anxiously. "T is true that we were going to Presqu'isle, but you would better take me to the road between the two forts and let me make my own way to safety."

"Never!" declared Randolph warmly, and felt amply rewarded by the look that came into her eyes. "That is not the Virginia way! We will escort you to within sight of Presqu'isle. It will be safer for us to go on to that post than back to Le Boeuf, where traces of our visit may by this time have been discovered."

The matter being thus decided, the party set off north-westward, Barnaby and the rangers in the lead, Randolph and Alfrede following. Soon they climbed a wooded ridge from whence they took a last look at the scene of the late conflict. Then they passed on into the primeval forest.

Had they paused upon the ridge a few minutes longer, they would have perceived, stealing through the forest toward the place they had quitted, an armed man of magnificent proportions, dressed in the uniform of a captain of Canadian regulars. They would have seen him creep into the very thicket from which had come the volley that had worked so effectually towards the captive's release. They would have seen him take a cautious survey of the

spot, then bound suddenly erect, spring forward to the bodies of the five dead savages, and there stand stamping, gesticulating, and giving vent to the imprecations that come instinctively from the mouth of an enraged and disappointed French Canadian.

CHAPTER X

THE PARTING

"DO you know the whereabouts of Captain Van Braam?" Randolph asked Alfred, as they made their way down the further side of the ridge.

"He stopped at Fort Le Bœuf three weeks ago on his way to Quebec," the girl replied. "We entertained him as well as we were able, and he repaid us by making us merry. We grew very fond of him. He talked much of you; one would think he was your father to hear him descanting on your virtues and valor."

"Good old Van Braam! Did he give you my letter?"

"Yes."

"When you read it, did you recall the biblical injunction, mademoiselle?" he asked, with some trepidation.

She laughed merrily. "After today I shall never regard you as my enemy," she said evasively. "Think of what I should now be suffering if you had not come so opportunely!"

"If I had had choice of every deed possible, I would have chosen this," he said, with a fervor that brought the blood to her face and caused her to drop her eyes. "But I must not forget the aid my comrades rendered."

"They are bold good men," she said, with enthusiasm. "Lieutenant Currin seems a droll fellow."

"He and Colonel Washington are my best friends," said Randolph, and he told the story of Barnaby's life and marriage.

"How romantic! And are they happy?"

"I know of no couple who are more so. They have the finest five-year-old boy in the colony of Virginia — a regular little angel and devil all in one! When we left for this trip, he gave each of us a kiss. He said it would keep the 'Injuns' from getting us."

"The little dear!" Alfrede cried.

Talking thus, they followed the rangers through the darkening forest. Alfrede's courage and spirits had returned. She was again the piquantly charming girl of Fort Le Bœuf. As for Randolph, some sorcery had suddenly transformed the wilderness into a paradise. Naturally imaginative and of a romantic temperament, he felt his whole being thrill with new and overpowering emotions. Every time he helped her over a prostrate tree or down some difficult ascent he wanted to take her in his arms, to tell her that he adored her, that he must follow Barnaby's advice and carry her to Virginia.

The sun set in a blaze of color; the stars came out; the moon rose; but still the little party stumbled on through the forest, dreading to stop lest savage pursuers might be on their trail. At last, however, the girl seemed so much exhausted that, despite her protests, Randolph ordered camp to be made. Following the plan they had used since they had been in the enemy's country, the rangers doubled back for a hundred yards or so on a course parallel to their trail and stopped on the top of a partly open ridge. All had eaten while on the march a frugal supper of dried venison and parched corn, so that nothing remained to be done but to prepare a place to sleep. They did not dare to light a fire, nor to use their hatchets; but the men collected fallen leaves and cut spruce boughs with their knives and under an immense tulip tree constructed a comfortable couch, over which they fashioned a rude shelter of branches.

"This must be your abiding place for the night," said Randolph, handing her his own blanket. "'T is a rude apartment, but the best we can offer. Alas! we do not have Aladdin's wonderful lamp."

She said good night and crept into the little bower. For some time she lay there gazing out upon the smiling moon and thinking of the strange events of the day. "I suppose I ought still to be afraid," she murmured to herself, only to add happily: "But I am not. I never felt safer in my life!" Presently tired Nature asserted her rights, and the girl slept.

Randolph insisted upon taking the first watch, and, rifle in hand, sat down in the shadow beside the little bower. The others, wrapping themselves in their blankets, lay down under neighboring trees. Soon the only conscious being in the camp was the sentinel.

There was no danger of his neglecting his trust. The strange manner in which the beautiful girl whose sleeping form lay almost within reach of his hand had once more been thrown in his path would have sufficed to keep him awake, even had his sense of duty been far less strong. Knowing all that depended upon him, he felt a sweet pleasure in his vigil.

For a long time he heard no sound save the usual noises of the night. Once a wolf walked across the top of the ridge, but caught the man-scent and slunk away. An interval of profound quiet followed. Then, from near the foot of the ridge a crashing of brush gave warning that some heavy body was forcing its way through. Presently a dark figure appeared in an opening among the trees and began to climb the ridge. At first Randolph believed it was a prowling bear; but when it emerged from the shadow of the trees, he saw with a shock of foreboding that it was a man, dressed in uniform and carrying a rifle. The new-

comer reached the top of the ridge and stood for a few moments gazing out over the moonlit country that lay before him. The moon now fell full upon his face. It was Reparti.

Randolph threw his rifle to his shoulder and took aim. The Frenchman stood scarce twenty yards distant; his life lay in the Virginian's hands. But, unaware of the causes that had led Reparti on his nocturnal journey, the sentinel hesitated to fire. The report might bring up other enemies; besides he liked not the idea of slaying even his bitterest enemy in cold blood. He even thought of calling to the Frenchman and intrusting him with the task of escorting Alfrede to safety, but immediately dismissed the idea. So, with finger on the trigger, he watched his man, determined to fire at the first sign of discovery. But Reparti remained wholly unconscious of his peril. Presently he chose his course and set off at a pace that soon carried him out of hearing. Randolph watched long and anxiously for followers, but none appeared, and he finally concluded that the Frenchman was alone.

Long after midnight Randolph roused Currin to relieve him, and communicated what he had seen.

"Now what is that one-eyed devil doin' trapesin' round over the country at this time of night, I dunno," said the Irishman. "'T was a good thing for him Barnaby Currin did n't take the first watch! The time may come, Charles, when you'll wish you had n't been so merciful. But lie down an' get a bit of sleep. You ought to've waked me earlier."

Randolph wrapped himself in Currin's blanket. It seemed to him that he had scarcely lost consciousness ere he was aroused by the Irishman's saying:

"Wake up, Charles! The east's beginnin' to redden up a bit. We ought to be after startin'."

The other soldiers were already astir. All that remained to be done was to awaken the girl. It seemed a pity to do so, but the danger of pursuit was too great to admit of longer delay, and reluctantly Randolph went to the little bower to arouse her. A ray of moonlight shone in upon her face, and he could not resist the temptation to gaze a few moments down upon her. Then, with fluttering heart, he shook her slightly, saying in a low voice: "Awaken, mademoiselle; we must be going."

Slowly the dark eyes opened and looked up into his. "Oh!" she cried, but quickly remembered her situation and crept out.

"*Bonjour, mademoiselle, comment vous portez-vous ce matin?*" he said, with the lowest of bows.

"Since when have you been a Frenchman?" she cried gayly.

"Is not my accent perfect?" he asked in English, as they set out.

"No Parisian could do better. I congratulate your instructor. *Mais*, why need I be talking your barbarous English?" and she made him a long speech in French.

"Pardon me! pardon me! my vocabulary is limited, alas!" he said confusedly. "But I am determined to learn. I think I shall be able to speak it by the time we take Quebec."

"*Sans doute!*" said Alfrede sarcastically.

"Already I can conjugate the verb *aimer* in every mood, tense, and voice," he continued, ignoring her insinuation.

"*Eh bien!* that is the first step in becoming a Frenchman. It is his first accomplishment."

"Captain Randolph jabbers away 'round the camp-fire at nights," said Barnaby, who was listening. "The boys here was a little afeard he was goin' loony at first, but I told 'em not to be oneeasy."

"Barnaby!" exclaimed Randolph.

"You see I'd already had an introduction to it, miss," the Irishman persisted. "Comin' out, we stopped a couple of days at my little home in the Shenandoah valley. Mrs. Currin knows Frinch herself, an' I'll be blamed if the two of 'em did n't spend the whole of the time chatterin' away like a couple of parrakeets, without me bein' able to understand what they was sayin' or bein' able to get in a word edgewise."

"Mrs. Currin speaks French perfectly," said Randolph, by way of explanation. "It is one of her many accomplishments."

"I told 'em if they did n't talk so I could understand, I'd apply to the burgesses for a divorce," continued Barnaby. "It's easier to get to heaven than it is to get a divorce in Virginny, but I thought I had good grounds."

"And did they heed the warning, Monsieur Currin?"

"No more than if I'd been a buzzing mosquiteer," said the Irishman. "Even me little Barnaby began talkin' Frinch. Then I said it was high time to be startin' on our scout."

Meanwhile the little party had been making their way briskly through the forest. When the sun rose, they had a meager breakfast, and, after a refreshing draught from a clear brook, moved forward again. The sun soon disappeared behind thick clouds; but, though none of the Virginians had ever been over the route before, they were able to keep unerringly toward their goal by observing the moss on the trees and the direction of the watercourses. Toward ten o'clock they surmounted a hill, from which they beheld the blue waters of Lake Erie and, on the shore of a wide harbor almost enclosed by a claw-like peninsula, the log bastions and palisades of Fort Presqu'isle.

"You must not come further," said Alfrede. "There

are always Indians hanging about the fort who might discover you. I can easily find my way now."

"No," dissented he. "I can't let you attempt it. I will leave my men here and escort you myself until we reach a point from which you can make your way in absolute safety."

Alfrede remonstrated against his taking the additional risk; but as he insisted, she had perforce to assent. Leaving her for a moment with Barnaby, he walked to where the other borderers were standing in order to give them some instructions.

"It's sorry I am, miss, to be tellin' you good-by," said Barnaby soberly. "If ever you should be in the valley of the Shenandoah in Virginny, come an' see us. You an' my wife Ellen can talk Frinch together as long as you're a mind to, an' I won't be sayin' a word."

"I know I should enjoy meeting your wife and that wonderful son of yours," she said graciously. "Even though I never see you again, you may be sure that I shall not forget your brave assistance. Perhaps some day I may be able to repay it."

The borderer examined the priming of his rifle judiciously, and shut the pan.

"Stranger things are often after happenin' than that you should visit Virginny," he said meaningfully. "As for the debt, just observe my friend Charles yonder, see what a fine-lookin' true-hearted gintelman he is—an' we'll call it square. They don't make many like him, miss. He's of one of the first families in Virginny, but he thinks just as much of plain folks as he does of aristocrats. They all like him — both kinds of 'em. The only trouble with him is that he's a mite too reckless. The morning before we got cornered in Fort Necessity a big passel of Injuns chased him an' me through the woods, and one of 'em knocked

me down with his hatchet. Of course, Charles ought to've run on an' saved his own bacon, but not him! He stopped right there, helped me up, an' we stood 'em off till some Buckskins come."

"You old prevaricator!" cried Randolph, who had drawn near in time to hear the last. "The fact is, mademoiselle, that Lieutenant Currin had already shot three of the imps. Why, if it had n't been for him, I'd have lost my scalp long before he was hit."

"*Mon Dieu!*" the girl cried, looking from one to the other. "Which am I to believe? But I have the secret — you are both brave men!"

"At least we are good friends," Randolph said, and he put his arm around Barnaby's shoulders.

Alfrede said good-by to Barnaby and then to the two borderers, whom she thanked so prettily for their valor in her behalf that the honest fellows blushed crimson with satisfaction and stood with their hats in their hands until she was out of sight.

"Blast my buttons, but ain't she a beauty!" exclaimed one of them, when he had partially recovered breath. "It give me the pedoddles jist to talk to her. I ain't done shakin' yit!"

"She's none too good fer Cap, though," said the other loyally. "My! ain't they a span o' thoroughbreds now!"

Meanwhile Randolph and Alfrede were moving cautiously forward through the forest. In the course of half an hour they reached a point from which the way to the fort was much more open.

"You must not go a step further," said the girl determinedly. "If you leave this cover, you will be seen."

"Here then we must say good-by," he acquiesced reluctantly. "I am sorry."

Never, never had he found parting so difficult.

Her lips trembled. "I shall never forget your gallantry and kindness," she said earnestly.

"I hope I shall see you again," he said somewhat lamely, wondering what had become of his self-assurance.

"Perhaps you will," she said demurely. "It seems that we have a habit of meeting."

For some moments neither said a word. Yet neither made a move to go. Each stole a glance at the other.

"Mademoiselle, may I ask you a question?" he asked at last, in a constrained voice.

"As many as you wish," she answered shyly, looking down at the stone she was poking with her moccasined foot.

"T is presumptuous in me to ask, but are you to marry Captain Reparti?"

She hesitated, a warm flush suffusing her face. A saucy evasive answer trembled on her tongue, but she did not utter it.

"No," she said finally.

"I am glad," he said, though the words were unnecessary. "The thought that perhaps you were was a motive that led me to spare his life last night."

"Last night? I do not understand."

He told her of Reparti's midnight appearance.

"That was very strange," she said. "I wonder what he could have been about."

"I do not know. Mademoiselle, you have answered my question; will you make me a promise?"

"That will depend upon the request, monsieur," she said. The color rose in her face; her breath came quickly.

"It is that you will not marry *any* one until I see you again," he said haltingly.

"What a strange request!" she cried, half relieved, half sorry.

He failed to notice that she did not seem greatly displeased. His face took on a hurt look.

"I suppose you think me most presumptuous. Forgive me," he murmured, aghast at his boldness.

"How could a girl make such a promise as that, monsieur? Why, you may *never* see me again!"

"I will if this infernal war ever ends," he declared resolutely. "But it is cruel to keep you longer. You must hasten to the fort and secure food and rest."

"Adieu, Captain Randolph; may Our Lady and the Saints watch over you!" she said feelingly, and slowly turned to go.

"Good-by, mademoiselle, good-by," he said, bending over her hand. "Forget my foolish request."

At a few paces' distance she stopped and looked back at him. There was a look in his brown eyes that touched her.

"I make the promise, and I will keep it, though I never see you again," she said. Then, as if panic-stricken at the words she had uttered, she ran swiftly down the slope.

He watched her until she was out of sight; then turned reluctantly to retrace his steps. He had not gone far when he came upon Barnaby Currin standing behind a tree with a quizzical look on his jovial face.

"I thought I told you to stay on the ridge," said Randolph haughtily, not meeting his subordinate's eyes.

"Sure, an' you did that."

"Why did n't you obey orders?"

"I was fearin' you might run into a nest of Injuns. Two rifles are better than one in such festivities."

"You're not well disciplined," said Randolph, trying to be severe but failing. "I shall have to court-martial you. Don't you know that obedience is the first requisite in a soldier?"

"Sure, I plead guilty, an' leave the punishment to my

immejete superior officer," returned Barnaby imperturbably. "I'm willin' to admit that you've got me beat at soldierin'; but at one thing you, too, have much to learn, Charlie dear."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Randolph suspiciously.

"Some years ago, when you was younger, you told me that a certain gentleman was 'obtuse.' I asked you what you was after meanin' by the word, an' you said it meant 'to be blunt,' or 'not sharp.' Well, I mean that in love makin' you're like the gentleman; you're obtuse. I saw the partin' — kape cool now! there was n't nothin' to see, for it was n't managed accordin' to the science of the game. There ought to have been a bit of besiegin', some surroundin', an' then a grand assault. Take the word of an Irishman for it, the town would have capitulated on the first summons. 'Neither a fortress nor a maid will hold out long after they begin to parley,' says Poor Richard; an', faith, he knows what he's talkin' about."

"I think you're mistaken," said Randolph, with much the air of one who hopes he is wrong. "I have seen Mademoiselle de Saint-Pierre but a few times."

"Shucks! what difference does that make? Does it make any difference to *you*? I know the signs. If you want her, an' you're a plumb fool if you don't, you ought to've done as I said an' eloped to Virginny, leavin' a note behind for the old gentleman. She would n't 've needed no tyin' to be made to go. You don't seem to've learned none by helpin' me. 'T is the bould man who wins in love as in war. You're bould in war but timid in love. The men of my family have been bould in both. My grandfather Currin was a bog-trottin' Catholic Irishman in Ulster. The Scotch thereabouts hated all such like pizen; an', truth to tell, they were n't alone in the feelin'. He

saw a Scotch lass in Londonderry one day, eloped with her the next, an' ended his days a good Presbyterian. My own father eloped with my mother, an' I eloped with Ellen, as you have reason to know. But you're an Englishman; what could one expect of you?"

"For once, I wish I were an Irishman," said Randolph regretfully.

CHAPTER XI

DID LE BON DIEU HEAR?

MEANWHILE Alfrede, with the flag that floated above one of the bastions as her guide, made her way slowly toward the fort.

"I must not hasten; *mon Dieu*, I must not!" she kept saying to herself. "I shall have to tell who were my rescuers. They will be pursued. I must give them time to escape."

When she was near enough to feel safe, she sat down under a beech tree from which the leaves and nuts were falling in little showers with every puff of wind, and resolutely fought back the fatigue that threatened to overmaster her.

She had not been there long when one of the great wooden gates of the stockade opened and gave exit to about a dozen Frenchmen and a score of Indians. Like some hunted partridge she crept down beside the log on which she had been sitting, and thus, partially screened by some tall grass, waited for the party to pass. As they drew nearer, she saw to her dismay that the Frenchman in the lead, gesticulating violently as if urging the others to renewed speed, was Reparti. They were so intent upon their errand that all the Frenchmen and most of the warriors passed within a rod of where she lay trembling without noticing her. But the roving beady eyes of the last savage fell upon an unconcealed fold of her dress.

"Ugh!" he exclaimed, pointing with naked arm toward his discovery.

The whole party stopped, and wonderingly gathered round her.

"Mother of God, it is mademoiselle herself!" cried one of the officers, whom Alfrede recognized as Captain Le Moyne and knew to be an honest man. "She has escaped."

Determined not to betray the reason for her concealment, she feigned exhaustion and gave no sign of life. But when Reparti, much relieved at discovering her, attempted to raise her in his arms, she repulsed him with a vigor that contrasted decidedly with her behavior on the preceding evening. Throwing aside all pretense, she struggled to her feet.

"Where are the rascals?" demanded Reparti.

"To whom do you refer?" she asked, determined to detain the pursuers as long as possible.

"The English who had you captive."

"I have not been captive to any English."

"The English, then, who took you from the Iroquois. Where are they? They are lurking spies."

"How did you know that I was captive to the Iroquois?"

The Frenchman flushed slightly, but was equal to the emergency. "I was hunting. I came upon their trail and followed it. Had I been a little earlier, I would myself have saved you."

"I was quite satisfied with my rescuers. How did you know that it was I who was the captive?"

"Ah, mademoiselle, there was no mistaking the print of your moccasins. No other in all these forests has such a dainty foot. Besides," he continued, "on arriving at Presqu'isle I found the rest of your party, who had been rescued by Le Chat and my Ottawas."

The girl's face lit up with joy. "Thank God!" she cried. "Were all unhurt?"

"All. But tell us quickly, mademoiselle, where you last saw the English."

"They rescued me from the Iroquois. All my life I should be sorry if any harm came to them," she said earnestly.

"They are enemies of France, mademoiselle," he persisted. "They are spies. We shall not waste time in holding a court-martial when we capture them."

"Surely you will let them go," she pleaded. "They risked their lives to save me. They risked them a second time to escort me to a place of safety."

Her eagerness caused a suspicion to dawn upon him.

"Who were the knaves?" he demanded.

"Virginians under Captain Randolph," the girl answered proudly, then bitterly regretted what she had said.

Reparti's face grew mottled with rage. "*Nom de Dieu!* is that presumptuous coxcomb again in this region?" he shrieked. "He shall know what it is to dance about the stake! He shall have burning splinters thrust into his eyes and a necklace of red-hot tomahawks about his neck!"

The savages whooped their approval. All were Ottawas in the secret of the imposture of the day before, and one was the very warrior who had escaped when Alfred was rescued. The girl turned pale at this display of ferocity, but did not lose her courage.

"*Ma foi*, you talk as if you had him already in your hands!" she cried sarcastically. "If you had seen him slay the Iroquois, you would not be in such a hurry!"

"Tell us where you left the knaves," Reparti demanded fiercely. "We lose time. *Pardieu*, you shall tell us!"

"Monsieur, you forget whose daughter I am!" she said haughtily. "These brave gentlemen will not allow me to be threatened."

"Mademoiselle is right," said Le Moyne pacifically yet firmly. "You go too far."

"*Merci*, Captain Le Moyne; you are a gentleman born," she said significantly.

For a few moments Reparti looked from one to the other like a baffled bull. "Pardon me, mademoiselle," he begged finally, though with ill grace. "In my anxiety to destroy the enemies of our king, I forgot myself."

"That is much better, monsieur," she said condescendingly. "You should engage Captain Le Moyne to teach you lessons in politeness."

Naturally this did not tend to lessen Reparti's anger, but he managed to repress his rage and asked in as civil a voice as he could command where the English had left her.

"Do you wish to know the exact spot, monsieur?" she asked, with great deliberation.

"*Certainement*, else why should I ask?"

"Then I fear I cannot tell you. I am not sure that I could discover it myself," she said airily.

"Then tell us approximately."

"But what good will that do you?"

"My warriors will easily find the trail."

"But the English will be gone. They travel very fast."

"Never fear! we shall catch them. The pursuer always has the advantage."

"But what will you do when you catch up with them?"

Reparti's anger again burst its bounds. "Come, come, mademoiselle!" he exclaimed. "Tell us where you last saw the rascals!"

Alfrede hesitated. She would have liked to prolong the conversation still further, for each moment thus gained might mean life to the Virginians. But she saw that the Indians and the other Frenchmen were also growing impatient.

"They brought me to the road perhaps half-way between this place and Le Bœuf," she said at last.

"That is enough! *En avant!*" cried Reparti triumphantly. "Le Chat, let two warriors follow the road on each side to see if they can find the trail of the skulkers nearer the fort. Adieu, mademoiselle. When I return, I shall bring you a love knot of Captain Randolph's hair."

The girl saw that she must play a trump card. "Oh, but, messieurs," she exclaimed, with well-simulated concern, "surely you cannot think of pursuing with so small a party! The English number sixty men, all well armed. I cannot allow my father's friends, the king's brave servants, to throw away their lives thus. You must wait for reinforcements."

The whole party paused abruptly.

"How could that be?" demanded Reparti. "I saw the trail of but four."

"Those who rescued me were only a part of the detachment," she said readily. "When we joined the others, I counted the whole party. The total number was sixty or sixty-one, I was not sure which."

Her speech made a decided impression upon the savages and upon all the Frenchmen save Reparti.

"Your caution is most timely, mademoiselle, and shows that you are a true daughter of your illustrious father," said Le Moyne. "It is evident, Captain Reparti, that we are too few to attempt pursuit. Let us return to the fort and gather a larger party."

"I do not believe there are so many," said Reparti irresolutely. "The dangers through which she has passed must have affected mademoiselle's head."

Alfrede shrugged her shoulders disdainfully, and, turning her back on him, started for the fort. "I have done my duty in warning you," she called back.

After taking a few steps, she began to walk unsteadily and then stopped.

"Captain Le Moyne," she said appealingly, "will you not assist me to the fort? I am much fatigued."

The officer sprang to her side with great alacrity. "Wait for me, comrades," he called.

Reparti attempted to lead the party on, but the other officers remonstrated and insisted that he should at least wait for Le Moyne. The savages, despite all Reparti's raging and fuming, showed even less anxiety to take the trail of sixty Virginians. After wrangling for some time, the whole band followed Alfrede and Le Moyne back to the fort.

The first person the girl saw upon reaching the gate was her father. He had just arrived and had received a confused account of his daughter's capture but not of her escape. Presently, when they had partly recovered their composure and were alone in the cabin allotted to them, she told the story of her adventures, confessing with hot tears the stratagem she had used to confound Reparti.

The chevalier listened intently with a dawning comprehension of something she thought she had concealed. When she finished, he kissed her again, and, pinching her cheek, said cheerily:

"Captain Randolph is a brave man, a gallant gentleman, even though an enemy. He gave me back my only treasure. I should be ungrateful indeed if I, too, did not wish that he should continue to wear the hair which so much becomes him. I shall insist that since he has so large a force, to pursue with the men we have available would be foolhardy. Do not weep, *petite*. Doubtless *Le Bon Dieu* shut his ears when you were telling of the sixty Virginians — 'all well armed'!"

CHAPTER XII

THE BURSTING OF THE STORM

BARNABY CURRIN, Randolph, and four other horsemen were fording the Shenandoah. As his horse stepped out of the river upon the sandbar, Barnaby, who was foremost, looked up at the August sun, which had just begun to assume his scorching power, and then turned to Randolph.

"Today is me boy's birthday," he said; "an' I do be wantin' to reach the fort before he goes to sleep. Until you've had children of your own, Charles, you'll never have no idea how the little fellers get a tight hold on your heart so you can't bear bein' away from them for long — especially in times like these. Every minute of the days we're out on such scouts as this I do be feelin' anxious about me little Barnaby."

Randolph took off his hat and mopped his moist forehead, disclosing to view upon his temple a scar that strengthened rather than marred the manly beauty of his face. Then, as the little cavalcade climbed the river bank, he said sympathetically:

"I believe I know how you feel. I wish that you would yet accept my offer to send the family to Eastover."

"T is Ellen's pride, as I've told you," said Barnaby. "Not that I'm blamin' her."

Randolph nodded comprehendingly. "Set the pace, if it please you," he said. "The rest of us will try to keep up."

But most of the way led through thick woods, and progress was so slow that when noon came they were still thirty miles from the fort. They halted to let their horses graze, and, back to back, with rifles ready to their hands, sat down under a maple tree to eat their own scanty meal. Before them brawled the shallow Shenandoah, its water so pellucid that every line of the pebbles on its bottom was discernible; while beyond stretched away to a distant line of bold blue mountains the rich valley with its mantle of majestic forest, interspersed here and there with open glades and an infinite variety of flowering shrubs.

"Eden could not have been fairer," said Randolph, with a wave of his hand towards the mountains. "How strange that such a valley should be a place of horror — its beauty but a mockery!"

He paused, and a look of bitterness came into his face. "The past two years seem like a fevered nightmare — the death-trap into which we plunged with Braddock, the wild rout along the wilderness road, and our yet wilder fight to defend the border. How pitiful have been our efforts! George has proved himself a hero; but, God in heaven, what can he do when given but one weak regiment with which to hold a hundred leagues of mountainous frontier against all the moccasined hordes of the Northwest set on by hell-hound Frenchmen! Only following them into their lairs can bring us safety, and for that we are much too weak. 'Fore God, when I think of governor and burgesses wrangling over supplies — the tidewater aristocrats racing, cock-fighting, and sipping their Madeira in the safety of their plantations and caring not a sixpence for the people of the border, I want to ride into Williamsburg, seize all the indifferent, and put them *unarmed* into the most exposed stockade!"

"I'd steal the bar to the gate," said Barnaby, with a chuckle, and the other borderers swore assent.

"The civilized world and the savage as well are against us," Randolph went on bitterly. "France, Sweden, Saxony, Austria, the Holy Roman Empire, and Russia — all in arms, and King Fritz of Prussia our sole ally."

"He's put in some licks that'll be remembered!" said Barnaby, with enthusiasm. "Faith, though, 't is little enough we have to show for the three years since the ruction began. Braddock beaten, Duquesne still in the hands of Satan's imps, Oswego taken last year by Montcalm — an' the Lord only knows what'll happen to us this year. Only Dieskau whipped beside Lake George, an' I'm thinkin' Sir William might not be a baronet if the Chevalier de Saint-Pierre had n't been killed in the first skirmish. Poor Miss Saint-Pierre! I took quite a likin' to that girl. I reckon she misses him a good deal. But who the devil's this?"

All gave ear and heard the sound of hoof-beats approaching from up the valley. Catching up their rifles, the little band slipped quietly behind trees. Presently a dozen horsemen came in sight.

"Why, 't is Sergeant Armstrong and his men!" Randolph exclaimed, and stepped out of his covert. "What can have caused them to leave the fort?"

"What are you doing here, sergeant?" he demanded severely, as the party rode up.

"You driv 'em off, did you?" cried the sergeant excitedly, without noticing the question.

"What under heaven do you mean?" asked Randolph.

"Why, the Injuns who had you surrounded, of course," was the answer. "I'm right glad none of you got hurt."

"We have n't been surrounded by any Indians," said Randolph, mystified. "Why, man, we have n't seen an Indian for three weeks."

The sergeant was so astonished that he almost fell out of his saddle. "Well, I'll be jiggered!" he gasped out. "Then what did your order mean?"

"What order, man! In God's name, what means this mystery?"

"Why, captain, yesterday evenin' a big black buck of a nigger come racin' into Neally's Fort with no hat on, his clothes all tore, an' said he'd come down the Valley forty miles from where you'uns was surrounded by a big passel of Injuns. He had your order to hurry up or you'uns was goners. As quick as I could I mounted these 'leven men on the only hosses we had an' sot off. It got dark purty quick, an' we could n't go no furder, but we started airly this mornin', an' here we be."

"I have never seen such a negro; I have never written such an order," said Randolph. "Do you have it with you?"

The sergeant fumbled in the fold of his hunting-shirt, and finally produced a crumpled bit of soiled paper.

"Here it be," he said.

Randolph took the paper and found that it was, in truth, signed with his own name and contained an order such as the sergeant had described. But it was not in Randolph's hand-writing, nor in that of any other officer of the Virginia regiment.

Randolph staggered backward as the significance of the fact burnt itself into his brain. "May God preserve them!" he cried involuntarily.

"What is it?" asked Barnaby Currin.

"Sergeant," said Randolph hoarsely, "you are the victim of a trick. This was written by a Frenchman. The negro is doubtless one of the runaways whom we know to have joined the enemy. The object was to get you and your men out of the fort so that it could be taken easily."

"My God!" cried Barnaby. "Ellen an' my little boy!" Like exclamations of dread there were from other lips as well, for Currin was not the only man present who had a family in the fort.

"There is just one chance," said Randolph, not losing his self-possession. "Perhaps the attack has not yet been delivered. Mount, men, and away! If you ever hastened in your lives, hasten now!"

There was no need of urging. The words were scarcely uttered before the borderers were in the saddle and were swinging down the stream along the trail by which the sergeant and his party had come. But it was exasperatingly slow work. The trees grew thick in most places, and only now and then did an open glade give opportunity for a dash at full speed. Swaying limbs tore their clothes and faces, yet still they kept on, fording creeks, leaping over logs and gullies, and climbing steep hills, without stopping for an instant. The horses, already tired and heated by their morning's work, were covered with sweat and foam and with blood from wounds inflicted by the merciless spurs. Barnaby, Randolph, and Sergeant Armstrong kept in the lead; the rest followed as the speed of their horses permitted.

"Sich a dumb-headed fool! Sich a dumb-headed fool!" Armstrong cried bitterly, over and over again. "But, captain, you mus' n't blame we'uns too much. We thought you'uns wuz in trouble an' wanted to help you out. Not a man of us thought of any trick."

"You did what you thought was right, sergeant," said Randolph, profoundly sorry for the man, for he had always shown himself a good soldier and had performed more than one bold exploit. "It was as clever a stratagem as if the devil himself had planned it. Any of us might have been deceived."

"My sister, Tom Cohoon's wife, 's in that fort," moaned the sergeant, not to be consoled. "*My Gawd*, I'll never see her alive agin! She's in no shape to travel if she's took. They'll tomahawk her. An' I'm to blame!"

From time to time he again burst forth into a stream of agonized self-denunciation. Randolph and Barnaby said little, but grimly devoted themselves to the work of steering their horses among the trees. Somewhat better mounted than the sergeant, they gradually drew ahead of him. A brave sight they made as they spurred onward, for finer figures of men or finer horsemen were not to be found in all Virginia.

"Only a mile more," cried Randolph, when the sun had fallen nearly to the tree-tops, and he and Barnaby were beginning the ascent of a long hill that overlooked the valley in which the fort lay. A hundred yards or so in their rear toiled the sergeant, while the rest of the party were strung out for miles behind them.

"Pray God we may be in time, an' may I be given the strength to bear what I may be called upon to see," said Barnaby, almost in a whisper.

"Your father 's a brave man. He and the others would do all they could," Randolph said hopefully.

At a swinging trot they rode up the hill and reached the top. A patch of dense woods still cut off their view of the fort, and they wheeled westward and made their way along the summit. As they did so, Randolph marked with sinking heart that a number of great black birds were soaring lightly over the clearing, and that a slender column of smoke was rising above the trees. A minute more and they had reached a point from which they commanded an unobstructed view of the fort.

But the fort was no longer there. Some palisades and one of the corner blockhouses remained to mark the site.

The rest was a heap of smouldering ruins, from which little wreaths of smoke were still rising. And from the tops of the palisades and of divers dead trees great black repulsive vultures were gazing lazily down at knots of their fellows upon the ground.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MASSACRE

"**T**HOSE buzzards tell an awful story, I fear," said Randolph huskily. "My God, Barnaby, I would give all I possess rather than have had this happen!"

As for Barnaby, with teeth set and brain on fire, he put spurs to his horse and dashed at breakneck speed down the hill. Randolph and the others followed. As they came on, the vultures rose slowly and heavily into the air, there to circle round and round, unwilling to quit the scene.

The site of the stockade presented a hideous spectacle. Men, women, and children, scalped and mangled with knife and tomahawk, half stripped of clothing, and torn by vultures, lay scattered here and there among the blackened ruins. Feverishly Barnaby ran from body to body, searching for his loved ones. As the other soldiers came up, they followed his example; and agonized cries and muttered maledictions rose to heaven as what had been a father, a mother, a wife, or a child was recognized.

Presently a dog began to bark at the edge of the clearing, and then came running toward Barnaby, who was still unsuccessful in his search.

"Why, it's Ring," groaned the Irishman. "Poor dog, you're all that I have left."

After leaping about joyously for some time, the hound walked again toward the woods, stopping now and then to bark and whimper as though he wished to lead his mas-

ter thither. Dreading what they might find, Barnaby, Randolph, and two or three of the men followed. A rod or more within the woods the dog stopped with a low whine at the foot of a large beech. When the searchers drew near the tree, they saw the prostrate form of a man and heard a weak voice say:

“Barnaby!”

“Oh, ‘t is me father!” cried the agonized officer.

It was a horrible figure that he knelt beside. There were deep wounds in the old man’s body and in his head; his scalp was gone; what remained was but the pitiable caricature of a human being.

“How did it happen? How did you come here? Where are Ellen an’ me little Barnaby?” cried Barnaby all in a breath.

“Wather, wather; thin I kin tell ye,” said the wounded man weakly.

The son gave him a drink from his flask, while Randolph sent one of the men for some blankets, on which they tenderly laid the mutilated body.

“I’ve been layin’ here all day, chokin’ wid thirst an’ fightin’ off buzzards,” said the old man.

“Where are Ellen an’ me little Barnaby?” begged Barnaby imploringly.

“Prisoners,” came the weak answer; “that is, if they hain’t been kilt since I seed ‘em tuk.”

“When did it happen? How did it happen?”

“Last noight about a’ hour to midnight the dogs begun to r’ar an’ stave round loike mad, an’ the stock acted on-easy. I wuz on guard. I knowed somethin’ wuz wrong, so I waked all av the min quiet as I could, an’ thin we tuk our places at the loopholes. It had n’t been long ‘fore we seen about a dozen Injuns come crapin’ on their bellies towards the gate. We let ‘em git up purty close; thin we

all let drive to wanst, hittin' four av 'em. The rist run fer kiver, an' others who'd been hidin' let loose a volley from all round the fort. They must've been fifty min at the laste, an' as we did n't muster but eliven min we seen we wuz in a toight hole. They did n't seem none too anxious, though, to rush in on our guns, fer a Frincher called out that if we'd surrendur they'd trate us well. But we remimbered how they dilt with the people over to Thompson's Fort whin they surrendered. I told 'em we'd see 'em in hell first.

"With that, they begun shootin' agin. We answered the best we could, firin' at the flashes. The wimmen an' bhoys loaded our guns fer us. But the bullets come singin' in through the loopholes, so that we did n't dare aim long an' could n't do much. 'Fore long four of us wuz hit; two roight through the brains, an' the others bad hurt. Still the Injuns did n't rush in, but kipt a-shootin' an' a-scrachin' an' a-callin' in to us what they'd do whin they tuk us. We stuck roight to worrk, fer we knowed all our lives an' those of the wimmen an' childer depinded on our kapin' the divils out av the stockade.

"Mebbe if they'd kipt on them same tactics, we moight 've held 'em; but 'long about one in the mornin' they tried a trick. First they begun to shoot in burnin' arrers, but we managed to put 'em all out. Thin they went to Sile Johnson's barn an' got his wagon, filled it up with fodder an' hay, an' dry bresh, an' thin brung it down to the edge av the clairin'. There they set the load afoire; an' a dozen, led by the big naygur who brought that message yesterday, backed it down plumb agin the southeast blockhouse. They kipt behint the wagon so well we could n't see much av 'em as they come on; but as they run fer kiver agin I managed to plant a ball in the naygur's back."

"Thank God fer that!" interjected Sergeant Armstrong.

"We seen to wanst that we wuz done fer," continued the old man after taking another drink of water. "The flames cotched roight onto the buildin', an' they wuz n't more than a dozen buckets of wather in the fort. Soon the hull corner wuz a-blazin' up, an' nigh nothin' could be done. We gethered the wimmen an' childer into one av the cabins. We had n't more'n done so afore the whole crew come racin' up to the corner where the foire wuz. Hid by the shmoke an' flames, they soon busted in, a short fat Injun with scars on his face an' a big one-eyed Frinchman leadin'."

"Reparti!" said Randolph, a world of meaning in his voice. "May heaven forgive me for not killing the fiend when I had the chance!"

"What foller'd wuz hell. The whole crew jumped on us loike wolves on a deer. In half a minute I wuz the only man lift alive or oncaptured. I backed into a corner with a' axe in me hands, an' I split the skull of the first Injun that come on. Another sthruck me in the side with his knife, but I caved his head in too. Just thin the fat chief come runnin' up. 'Fore I could git me balance agin, he sthruck me with his tomahawk. I did n't have no strength afther that, an' toppled over. He hit me twicet more, thin tuk his scalpin' knife an' tore the whole top av me head off. an' run away scrachin' an' wav'in' it about.

"Still I wuz n't dead yit. I knewed I had to die, but I wanted to live long enough to tell me story to somebody that could avenge us. I seen 'em break into the cabin where the wimmen an' childer were. I seen em' kill pore little babes, an' me with not strength enough to lift a finger. A big Injun grabbed little Barnaby be the hair an' wuz about to scalp him, whin the chief that'd kilt me stopped him. Ellen, too, they did n't hurt, fer the big Frinchman protected her. They tuk everything they had a mind to,

includin' most av the clothes off the dead; an' finally afther shoutin' an' scrachin' an' dancin' fer about a' hour they sot off, takin' Ellen, Barnaby, an' about a dozen other wimmen an' childer, with Tom Cohoon, Bill Hicks, an' Hermann Weiser, who they'd overpowered whin they bruk into the stockade.

"Afther they'd gone the foire spread to most av the other buildin's. I seen that if I did n't move, I'd be roasted to death, so I managed to crawl outside. Towards mornin' old Ring, who'd been off huntin' durin' the noight — one av his ould thicks — come home an' found me. Whin the sun got hot, I crawled in here. I'd've died long ago if I had n't been detarmined to live till I could tell what 'came av Barnaby an' Ellen an' the other folks."

As old Currin told his story the whole party of soldiers had gathered round to listen. Many were the muttered execrations with which it was punctuated. Accustomed as the borderers were to similar scenes, they had never beheld one so horrible as this. Tears partly of sorrow and partly of rage coursed down their bronzed faces.

The effort required to relate the tale exhausted most of the old man's remaining strength; after finishing it he fell into unconsciousness. But some whisky was forced between his lips; and presently he awoke from the stupor, though it was evident that he was failing fast.

"Virginians," he said, raising himself by a great effort upon one elbow, "before I go I want all of ye to swear that ye'll hunt down the crew that did this deed. I believe in God. I've tried to lead the life av a Christian. 'Vengeance is mine,' saith the Lord, 'I will repay;' but whin He writ down them words He did n't know about the divilities av Injuns an' hell-hound Frinchmen. So I say to ye: Slay an' spare not! God will be helpin' ye. I'm satisfied to go to me grave, fer I'm an old man 'most there anyway,

an' I know that I sint at least three there afore me. But save little Barnaby an' Ellen an' the other folks if ye kin. An' tell me precious little bhoy . . ."

He could not finish. His last vitality exhausted, he sank back upon the blankets dead.

"He is gone," said Barnaby, giving way to his grief.

"I cain't find Jenny," said Sergeant Armstrong presently. "They must 've taken her with Tom. But she won't stand the journey."

"What air we to do, captain?" asked one of the men dubiously.

"Do?" said Randolph between clenched teeth. "Do? We'll follow that trail — if it leads to hell!"

"Praise God!" said Barnaby.

CHAPTER XIV

THE AVENGERS

IT was nearing noon of the next day, and the little band were climbing a steep mountain slope covered with laurel thickets that afforded a thousand opportunities for their wolf-hearted foe to lie in ambush. All were on foot, for wild wastes of cliffs and crags had long since compelled them to abandon their horses. A little ahead hurried Barnaby and Randolph, following a fiercely eager hound; behind, uncomplaining, toiled the others.

"Look there!" said Randolph, stopping short. He pointed to a heap of clothing that lay beside the trail. Barnaby sprang forward and held up a piece of linsey-woolsey.

"'T is part of Ellen's petticoat," he said, after a hurried examination. "'I reckon these are from the dresses of the other women. The Injuns've bobbed off the bottoms so the captives can walk faster."

"'T is a sure sign the prisoners air tirin'," said Sergeant Armstrong, who had just come up. "I've seed it from their tracks. 'T won't be long afore we'll be seein' some more hellish work of the tomahawk. My pore sister'll be one of the first to suffer. She's expectin' a baby soon, an' she can't go far."

Barnaby's face was working in a way that was pitiful to see. "Ellen's strong," he said, in a half-choked voice; "but I don't know whether me little boy'll be able to keep up."

"*I know he will!*" Randolph declared optimistically, though he dared not look in his comrade's face. "He's a chip off the old block, Barnaby. He'll never give up. He's a little shaver now; but he'll be a rip-roarer, a regular swinge cat, when he's grown up — you'll see! If a prisoner keeps up, he is n't in much danger on the march, and we'll catch up with them before they reach Duquesne or the Indian villages."

Toward mid-afternoon the pursuers came to the deserted camp where the enemy had spent the preceding night. Some rude branch couches and shelters showed that an effort had been made, if not to secure the prisoners' comfort, at least to conserve their strength; while the scattered bones of a couple of deer proved there had been food.

"What is this?" asked Randolph, holding up a small rude hoop that he found upon a bush.

"'T is a sculp-drier," said Sergeant Armstrong. "See the long white hairs clingin' to it. Oh, the bloody devils!"

The pursuit was kept up until well after nightfall and was renewed next morning before sunrise. Toward noon the trail led over another mountain ridge. Half-way up the ascent, Ring turned aside from the trail into a laurel thicket and began to whine piteously. Barnaby and Randolph found him, with the hair on his neck and back fiercely erect, standing over the body of a woman.

"It is n't Ellen," said Barnaby, with infinite relief.

When Sergeant Armstrong came up and saw the mutilated form, his face turned ashen. "It's Jenny!" he groaned, dropping upon his knees. "My pore little sister!"

They placed the body tenderly in the hollow made by an uprooted tree and covered it as best they could with sods and stones. Then, with increased resolution, they took up again their errand of vengeance. Two hours later they came to the second camp of the enemy. It was a

beautiful spot beneath widespreading beeches that shaded a clear spring of pure water. But it was a place of horror. Close beside the spring stood a fire-withered sapling, at whose foot lay a charred and blackened heap around which the pursuers hovered in awful silence.

"A wicked deed has been done here," muttered Randolph hoarsely, his hands opening and closing convulsively. "Yet the Frenchmen who witnessed it tolerated it, perhaps encouraged it!"

While they still stared in fascination, they were startled by the sound of a voice. Looking up, they saw a white man running toward them from the direction that the enemy had taken.

"It's Tom Cohoon!" Sergeant Armstrong cried. "How'd you git away, Tom?"

The fugitive's clothing was torn, and he was so breathless that for some minutes he was unable to articulate a word. "I bruk loose — jumped into a thicket — an' give em' the slip — but the varmints are on my trail," he at last gasped out.

"Jenny's killed. We buried her," said the sergeant, his lips twitching.

"I know," said Cohoon, and his youthful, almost boyish, face bore the look of an old man. "She give out, an' they killed her with their tomahawks. I was so far ahead I could n't do nothin'. The fat chief hit the first lick. Bill Hicks knocked him down with his fist. That's why they burned Bill. Poor fellow, they treated him awful! But he kept tellin' 'em they was brave men that would avenge him. I could n't bear to think of Jenny's bein' left to the wolves, so I took a slim chance to git away, an' come back to bury her."

"How are Ellen an' me little boy?" Barnaby asked imploringly.

"Ellen fainted while they was torturin' Hicks, but she seemed strong this mornin'," said Cohoon. "Barnaby's tough as hickory. He 's showed such grit that the Injuns've kinder took to him. I should n't wonder if they'd adopt him to take the place of one of the bucks we killed when they took the fort."

"How many devils are there?" asked Randolph.

"Thirty-seven Injuns an' two Frenchers. Eight Injuns was killed takin' the fort. Two others was wounded some, an' that makes the whole party move slower. Four are after me."

"How do you know that?" asked Randolph.

"I seed 'em follerin' from the top of that hill back yonder. They was about a mile behind. I mixed up my trail a good deal, but they'll be along after a bit. You'uns want to be watchin' out!"

A look of exultation that was almost fiendish flashed into Randolph's face. "They shall never go back!" he cried. "Virginians! this is our first chance for vengeance! Barnaby, take four of the men and post them in good cover alongside the trail. Let the pursuers pass you and get into this open space. Then I and my men will fire on them from that thicket yonder. If any try to escape, you *must* get them!"

"Trust us for that!" said Barnaby.

"Yes!" cried Armstrong, with an oath. "I'd like to ketch one of the varmints. I'd skin him alive!"

Some of the men growled their approval, for their fiercest passions were aroused.

"Silence!" ordered Randolph sternly. "I'll have no more talk like that. To your posts, and put at least three bullets in each red hide!"

The dispositions were quickly made; soon every man was crouching behind some leafy covert, waiting with trembling

eagerness for the coming of the foe. A flock of brilliant green and orange parakeets kept up a harsh chatter in some neighboring trees, but presently flew noisily away. For a time all was silence. Then, in the direction from which Cohoon had come, a brown thrush began to scold. Soon four be-feathered painted forms came hurrying along the trail among the trees. Two of them wore plumes of the war eagle braided in their long scalp-locks; a third had adorned himself with the shaggy horned frontlet of a buffalo; and the fourth had rendered himself even more hideous than any of his companions by donning a grinning head-dress of panther skin. All were young warriors, each anxious doubtless for the fugitive's scalp, in order that he might become a mighty man with the maidens of his village. With beady eyes bent toward the ground, they passed Barnaby's party and all unsuspectingly entered the fatal open space where the camp had stood.

"Fire!" cried Randolph.

The ten rifles sounded as one shot; three of the savages fell. The fourth, slightly wounded, turned and bounded back the way he had come. He ran merely to his death. Barnaby's men discharged their rifles, and the fugitive fell with all four bullets through his body.

Barnaby himself had not fired. At the instant Randolph gave the order the Irishman had glanced back along the trail, and, to his horror, had beheld, a hundred yards away, a fifth Indian, who whirled about and sprang away like a deer. His first bound carried him into a depression where he was out of range, but beyond this depression lay a rod or so of open ground on the further side of which stood a thicket. Barnaby knew well that if the warrior once reached this thicket he would be safe from pursuit. All hope of rescuing the prisoners would then be gone. Upon Barnaby rested the fate of the enterprise. Tremblingly he

waited for the fugitive to appear upon the other side. As the tufted head and painted body once more came into view he raised his rifle. The eternal hills were not more steady than was his weapon at the moment it poured forth its fatal contents. The savage, stricken by the pursuing bullet, fell with one hand grasping the first bush of the thicket that would have afforded him safety.

Randolph uttered a great shout of thanksgiving. "That shot saved everything!" he cried. "Run, some of you, and make sure that he is dead. God is with us! We cannot fail!"

Three minutes later five tufts of coarse black hair were dangling from the belts of as many stern frontiersmen. Randolph had looked on grimly with no word of chiding. Then, leaving the bodies to the wolves and vultures, the little band of avengers, accompanied by Cohoon, armed with one of his erstwhile captors' guns, again took up the pursuit.

Some miles further on they came to where the trail crossed the sand-bar of a creek. A little to one side of where most of the enemy and captives had walked Barnaby paused for a long time examining something.

"What is it?" asked Randolph, walking up to him.

The lieutenant pointed to some footprints in the moist sand. "Those were made by Ellen an' me little Barnaby," he said. And Randolph saw some glistening drops fall into the sand.

Randolph put his hand on his friend's shoulder. "Take heart!" he said. "Please God, in another day you shall have them again."

"Look here!" cried Barnaby, pointing to a spot further up the bar.

Printed in the smooth sand were the words:

"BARNABY AND ELLEN ARE WELL. GOOD-BY TO DADDY."

"They knew I'd foller! They knew I would, if I had to alone!" the father cried, and there was a world of love and resolution in his voice. "Be strong, Ellen an' me little boy, *daddy's comin'*!"

That night the pursuers supped right royally on the flesh of an elk that Randolph ventured to shoot in a deep valley from whence the sound of his rifle would not carry. Next morning they made an early start, and sunrise found them on the headwaters of the Monongahela.

Here a difficult problem presented itself. The trail showed that the main body of the enemy had followed the river bank toward Fort Duquesne, but that three or four had struck off to the northward as if steering for Venango, Fort Le Boeuf, or Presqu'isle.

Barnaby examined the two trails for a long time in silence. Finally he pointed to some impressions in the soft forest mold along the one that led to the northward and said:

"Those tracks were made by the two Frenchers. See how the toes turn out. The big ones are Reparti's. Two Injuns are with him, but I don't see the tracks of any of the prisoners."

"Then they must be with the other party," said Randolph.

"Some of them are," said Barnaby doubtfully. "I've found the print of Ellen's shoe over by that sycamore."

Ring was undecided which trail to follow, but finally seemed to wish to pursue the Frenchmen. But when the pursuers took the other trail, he soon grew reconciled.

By late in the afternoon it was evident that the enemy

could not be far ahead. Fearing discovery if they continued the pursuit in the daytime, the Virginians hid in a thicket, intending to follow in the night and attack the enemy in their camp. After nightfall they again moved forward, the eager hound showing the trail. Through the dark forest skirting the river they crept slowly, expecting every moment to catch sight of the enemy's campfires. But presently, a little distance below some rapids, the trail led out upon a wide bar. The hound followed it to the water's edge, and there came to a halt.

"My God, I'm fearin' they've taken to boats!" whispered Barnaby anxiously.

"We'll go back and try again," Randolph said.

They cast back upon the trail for a couple of hundred yards. But again the hound returned to the river.

"That settles it," said Barnaby despairingly. "They've gone by water. That dog has more sense than most humans. I reckon they hid their boats here on the way to make the attack."

"What's to be done?" asked Randolph blankly. "They will now travel faster than we can."

For some moments Barnaby was too much unnerved to answer. Then he gave a great gasp and was himself again.

"They took to their boats so late this afternoon that they must have camped after going eight or ten miles," he said thoughtfully.

"But they would camp on the other side, on the chance that there might be pursuit," objected Randolph.

"True, an' we'd have a hard time crossin' the river in the dark, even if we found 'em," Barnaby agreed. "But I was thinkin' of another way. About thirty miles below here by river are some more rapids that I saw last summer on a scout. They're so choked up with drifts that boats can't run 'em, and a carry has to be made by the bank

we're on. The river is so crooked that the distance by land is n't more than twelve or fifteen miles, I reckon. We might try to reach the rapids before 'em, an' attack as they make the carry."

"It's the best plan," said Randolph, hope rising once more. "If we reach the portage before them, we can surprise them more easily than we could in their camp. Men, are you ready for the venture?"

"We'll walk a hundred miles if you say the word, captain," said one of the men, and the others uttered exclamations of assent.

With Barnaby in the lead, and throwing all precautions against ambuscade to the winds, they plunged once more into the forest. Through thickets and swamps filled with rank and noxious weeds, over prostrate trees and rugged hills, they made their desperate way, heedless of bruises and torn hands. Not a man faltered or made complaint; yet so difficult was the way that when the sun rose, a third of the distance was still to go. But by the welcome light progress was much faster. In an hour they began to hear the thunder of the rapids, and presently came out upon the river bank some distance below them. Without losing an instant, they ran to the carrying place.

"Praise be! There hain't no fresh tracks!" Armstrong cried exultantly.

"Luck is with us again," said Randolph, no less joyfully. "We'll lay an ambush and give 'em such a surprise as they never dreamed of before!"

The place was admirably suited for such a purpose. On the opposite side of the river there rose from the water's edge a perpendicular wall of rock impossible of ascent. At its foot the cramped river plunged down a steep declivity so choked with rocks and great uprooted trees that a passage would be to the last degree hazardous. On the side on

which the pursuers stood, an eddy swept up to a convenient landing place, from which a short path led to the river below. Beside the path lay a dense thicket; in this the pursuers hid themselves.

"Men," said Randolph calmly, though he raised his voice in order to be heard above the roar of the rapids, "they outnumber us more than two to one, and our only hope lies in a complete surprise. We must not attack until the prisoners are so close to us that we can at once gather round them, or their fate is sealed. Remember that only the shots that hit count. Don't waste two bullets on the same man. At the camp too many of us aimed at the same warrior. We can't afford to do that this time. McCullough," he addressed the man furthest down the river, "when we fire, you are to shoot the warrior in the lead, though if any have reëmbarked, let them go."

He called each of the men by name and designated which of the enemy he was to fire at. "If we all get a man apiece or do nearly that well, some of the others will be sure to run. We'll then rush in and fight it out man to man with the rest. Heaven willing, we'll save our friends and teach these red wolves a lesson they'll never forget."

"Remember what we've seen an' suffered, boys!" cried Barnaby, his face that of some avenging Nemesis. "'T is victory or death for us an' those we love! Up yonder"—he pointed to the sky—"is One who will aid us!"

They had not long to wait. From around a bend far above there presently flew a little flock of wood ducks, followed soon by a crested kingfisher, uttering his strident cry. Then, one by one, appeared five birch canoes and a heavier wooden bateau filled with the enemy and the captives. The paddles, flashing in the morning sunlight, rose and fell with rhythmical precision. Aided by the current, the flotilla was soon so near that the occupants

could be plainly seen. The first three canoes contained only savages, whose painted bodies were partially clad in garments taken from the murdered settlers. The remaining canoes and the bateau carried both warriors and prisoners. Near the stern of the bateau sat Ellen Currin, a pathetic figure. Little Barnaby was nowhere to be seen.

CHAPTER XV

THE FIGHT AT THE RAPIDS

FROM his post in the thicket Randolph noted with deep concern that the three canoes containing only warriors were some distance in advance of the others. He began to fear that they would reach the portage too soon. So it fell out. When the foremost canoe, propelled with vigorous paddle strokes out of the swift current that threatened to sweep it into the rapids, touched the landing place, the seven warriors in it sprang ashore and, lifting it out of the water, began to carry it along the portage. The warriors in the next two canoes did likewise, and so it happened that more than half the enemy came abreast of the ambush at a time when the canoes containing the captives had either just reached the landing place or had entered the eddy above it.

Randolph now began to think that after all the circumstance might favor the rescuers. He delayed giving the signal to fire in the hope that the foremost savages might pass on and the immediate attack be made on those having charge of the prisoners. It required much self-control to wait quietly and watch the painted murderous band at whose belts swung grawsome evidences of their bloody work file past; but all the frontiersmen saw the great advantage which would be gained if some of their foes were to reembark before the fight began, so, with fingers itching for the trigger, they repressed their rising indignation. But that so many alert enemies, with senses keen as the

wolves of the forest, should pass the ambush without discovering it proved too much to hope for. One of the warriors carrying the third canoe, a stalwart son of the wilderness wearing a coat that Barnaby recognized as having belonged to his father, chanced to glance into the thicket and perceived the protruding muzzle of a rifle. Instantly he released the canoe as if it had been converted into red hot iron, and his mouth flew open.

The bullet from Barnaby's rifle cut short the yell of warning. Without waiting for any other signal the whole body of rescuers poured in a volley so well directed that it struck down a dozen other warriors. Three or four of the survivors sprang away in terror-stricken flight; most of the remainder discharged their fusils hastily and ineffectively into the thicket; but a few of the more experienced fired coolly and with fatal effect at the white forms that with furious shouts and flourished weapons came leaping out upon them.

"Save the prisoners!" cried Randolph and Barnaby in the same breath. Followed by Sergeant Armstrong, Co-hoon, and three or four others, they sprang toward the landing place, leaving the rest of the Virginians engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle in which clubbed guns, tomahawks, and long knives all played a deadly part, while the wild clamor of the combat rose even above the roar of the rapids. The savages who guarded the prisoners were not in good position for defense. One of the canoes had just been lifted ashore, and the warriors who had occupied it had not yet taken up their guns when the surprise came. One of them succeeded in snatching up his weapon and firing a shot that struck down the sergeant gasping and dying, but both he and his two companions fell an instant later under a hail of blows from the irate Virginians.

At the moment the fight began, the fifth canoe had just

reached the landing place. It contained three warriors, five women and children, and Hermann Weiser, the sole remaining man captive. Weiser was an enormous Pennsylvania Dutchman, the slowness of whose mental operations had become a byword among his neighbors. But on this occasion he displayed a courage and nimbleness of wit that gained for him the respect of all backwoodsmen, and no man thereafter was ever known to joke about "Hermann's thick-headedness." Throwing his great weight to one side of the frail canoe, he overturned it, spilling all its occupants into the river and wetting the rifles of the warriors. The water was mercifully shallow; and grasping the two children, the Dutchman waded to the shore with them, safely followed by the half-drowned women. There he dropped his burden, caught up a convenient boulder, and turned on his captors. He did so none too soon, for one of them was just aiming a blow at him with a tomahawk. Weiser caught the upraised arm with his left hand, and brought the boulder down with sufficient force upon the tufted head. A second savage sprang upon his back. The two wrestled with each other, now upon the sandy beach, now in the shallow water beside it, the guttural cries of the savage mingling with the deep Dutch oaths of the aroused settler. Once the savage managed to draw a knife from his belt, but the doughty Dutchman wrested it from his grasp, and it fell in the water out of the reach of either. At last, as they lay prostrate with the white man on top, Weiser seized the warrior's head with both his vast hands and put all his strength into a great wrench. There was a sickening crunch, and the settler rose from the twitching tawny body of his foe.

Meanwhile an equally desperate struggle was taking place for the bateau, which contained four warriors, Ellen Currin, and five other captive women. At the moment

when the rescuers came charging down to the landing place, the vessel was some yards from the shore; but its momentum, aided by an eddy, caused it to touch the land; and Cohoon, coming up that instant, seized it. Barnaby had also made directly for it; but one of the Indians who had been in the canoe with Weiser sprang in his way, and a contest was unavoidable. Before it was decided the great hound leaped upon his master's antagonist, and dog and savage came to the ground together. Thus relieved, Barnaby ran to where the savage in the bow of the bateau was striking Cohoon blow after blow with a tomahawk, while his comrades were desperately backing water with their paddles. But Cohoon, utterly careless of life, and inspired by a consuming desire for vengeance, held on doggedly until a blow pierced his brain and he fell forward into the water a dead man. Freed from Cohoon's detaining grasp, the bateau was quickly a dozen feet from shore. It was at this instant that Barnaby came bounding up. With a light leap he cleared the interval and landed upright in the bow.

"Barnaby!" exclaimed Ellen, gladly yet fearfully.
"Barnaby!"

"Lie down!" cried Barnaby to the prisoners, who fortunately were nearer the stern than were their captors.

And now ensued a grim conflict that for generations was told round the firesides of the border. If ever man was endowed with supernatural strength and skill and daring, this was the occasion and Barnaby Currin was the man. Before him were four warriors, each armed with a loaded gun. As the first raised his weapon to fire, Barnaby delivered a quick blow with his clubbed rifle that laid him bleeding in the bottom of the bateau. The second savage attempted to grapple with his antagonist, but was tossed out into the river as though he had been an infant. The

savage nearest the stern then aimed his gun; but, before he could pull the trigger, Ellen, who alone of the prisoners had disobeyed Barnaby's order, splashed a handful of water into the firing-pan, and the falling flint failed to ignite the charge. At the same instant the barrel of Barnaby's rifle descended with withering force on the head of his third antagonist.

"The rapids! the rapids! We are drifting into the rapids!" cried Ellen.

It was true. The bateau had been hurled out of the eddy and was floating broadside on to destruction. Ahead the river plunged with monotonous roar down a steep decline filled with jagged rocks and the mighty trunks of uprooted trees, round which the reckless surges dashed and bounded in the sunlight like tigers at play. Both white man and Indian looked and saw the danger. As if by mutual consent, they dropped their weapons, and catching up paddles, began an equally desperate battle with the watery element. To upset meant certain death for the women and probably for the men also, for in that swirling torrent even the most powerful swimmer could not keep his head above the surface for an instant. Even as the two foemen settled to their work, they saw the warrior whom Barnaby had thrown from the canoe dashed with resistless force against a rock and then disappear from view. It seemed impossible that the bateau, heavy and unmanageable as it was, could be brought through in safety. But the Indian was the best boatman of his tribe, while Barnaby himself was not without some skill upon the water. Working instinctively together, they managed to keep the craft out of the fierce surges that threatened to engulf it. A projecting rock rose full in their path, but a cunning and powerful stroke of the red man's paddle sent the craft glancing swiftly into the open current. Down they went,

amid the screams of the women, on the final plunge into a foaming caldron, where the curling waves swept in deluges over the gunwales. But the boat righted herself, and, though well-nigh sinking, was soon riding peacefully in the eddy below the carrying place, beside the dead body of the warrior who had gone through the rapids before it.

Barnaby at once snatched up his weapon to renew the conflict. But the savage had no mind to take his chance against the white demon who had destroyed his three comrades. Shaking off the feeble grasp which one of the women had bravely ventured to lay upon him, he dived headlong into the river; and the bedraggled feathers of his scalp-lock did not appear again until he was many yards down stream. After a hurried breath he vanished again, and the last the occupants of the bateau saw of him he was wading ashore toward a dark thicket. Barnaby made no effort to pursue him, but paddled hastily to the shore, where the sounds of conflict had ceased.

The battle there was also over. Five white men lay dead or dying; six others, including Randolph, who had a knife thrust through one of his arms, were more or less seriously wounded; the gallant Ring was bleeding from a great gash in his side, but was still worrying the mangled throat of the savage who had inflicted it. Such was the price of victory. Yet it could hardly be said that the price was high. Of the twenty-eight warriors who had entered the conflict, only nine had escaped; their prisoners were free.

"Where is our little boy?" were Barnaby's first anxious words to Ellen.

"They separated us," she cried tearfully, throwing herself into her husband's arms. "When we came to the headwaters of the river, Captain Reparti, the other Frenchman, the chief whom they call Le Chat, and another Indian carried him away with them. I implored, I got down upon

my knees, but they would not relent. The last I saw of my precious boy he was struggling in the chief's arms and crying good-by."

The father's face turned ashen; he leaned against a tree for support.

"That explains," he groaned, "why Ring wanted to follow that trail. But why did they wish my boy? Why did they take him?"

"Captain Reparti and the chief in some way found out that he is your son and that you took part in the rescue of Mademoiselle de Saint-Pierre. He swore horribly about you and Captain Randolph. He took our boy to be revenged on you."

"What a devil!" gnashed Barnaby. "Where are they making for?"

"For a camp of Indians and French on Loyalhannon Creek. From there they intend to go to Quebec, to which Reparti has been transferred. Oh, Barnaby, I fear we shall never see our little boy again!"

Barnaby comforted her as best he could, and then sought Randolph. He found him tying up the wound in his arm — pale but still able to give orders.

"I have heard," Randolph said regretfully. "What does Ellen know?"

After hearing the story, Randolph remained silent for some time. Finally he said huskily: "Before God, old friend, I can't tell you how sorry I am we could not rescue both. Some time we shall. But now the other party are beyond our reach. Before we could strike their trail again they would be at the camp on Loyalhannon. We can do nothing."

"I know," said Barnaby doggedly; "but it does n't make it any the easier to bear."

"I think of one thing that may prove of advantage,"

said Randolph, deeply touched. "This place is certain to be visited soon by Frenchmen from Duquesne. I will leave a written offer signed by me of five hundred pounds for the boy's safe return, and I will send similar offers to Quebec. Barnaby, if I thought a larger sum would prove more effective, I would gladly offer it; but to do so might give rise to doubts of my sincerity. The offer will at least render them less apt to murder him."

The father could only look his gratitude.

"Take courage! we'll have him yet! A child is safer among them than a grown person would be. They may adopt him as Cohoon — poor fellow! — thought they intended."

"Yet another thing," Randolph continued, seized by a sudden inspiration. "They are taking him to the region of Quebec. I have long felt that I should like to serve in that quarter, for it is there the decisive blows will ultimately be struck, and I hope to see a British fleet and army before the city. We'll resign, Barnaby, and volunteer in one of the northern regiments. In this way we shall be brought nearer your boy. We may be able to play a part in the overthrow of the power that has made these horrors possible. Ellen shall stay at Eastover. This time I will take no refusal. It needs some capable woman to preside over the household. Some day we'll sail up the Potomac with your boy. What a home-coming that will be!"

Hope catches at straws. Improbable as was the happy outcome that Randolph pictured, Barnaby crushed down the awful dread that gripped his heart, and grasped his captain's hand. "It's a great debt I'm layin' up to you, Charles," he said. "A man never had a better friend than you."

And thus quickly was a decision made that, by strange chance, was to affect not only the careers of individuals,

but also the fortunes of two great empires in their struggle for a continent.

Into the details of the painful march of the little band of rescuers and rescued back to the settlements it is needless to enter here. It is sufficient to say that the march was made in safety, and that the fame of the exploit filled the border and traveled even to Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. Soon after his return, Randolph set Colonel Washington and other powerful Virginia friends to work, and by December he and Lieutenant Currin held commissions in the Sixtieth Regiment of Royal Americans stationed at Fort Edward on the river Hudson.

CHAPTER XVI

A CHANGE OF SCENE

ON a stormy evening in the following February Lieutenant Barnaby Currin sat alone in his quarters before a fire of pine logs, thinking of the progress of the war.

The retrospect was as cheerless as the weather outside, for except in far away Bengal, where a grocer's clerk named Robert Clive had won a battle called Plassey, the year had been one of continuous disaster to British arms. While the incompetent Earl of Loudon, who was compared to St. George on the tavern signs, — always on horseback but never going forward, — complacently frittered away precious time raising cabbages at Halifax instead of capturing Louisburg, the French, with consummate craft, had delivered a counter-stroke. For months from every point of the horizon, painted warriors had been gathering at Montreal to assist their Canadian father; and never before had representatives of so many tribes been assembled under the fleur-de-lis. In August Montcalm had led this motley host and a force of French and Canadian troops to the head of Lake George, had captured Fort William Henry, and had spread terror throughout the Colonies. In Europe the campaign had been scarcely more encouraging, and Frederick of Prussia, after a brave struggle against hordes of enemies swarming in from every quarter from which the wind blew, seemed at the end of his tether.

"It's been a long, long lane," the Irishman said wearily to himself; "but I can't see no turnin' yet."

The cabin door opened, admitting a flurry of snow and the figure of a man wrapped in furs.

Barnaby sprang to his feet. "Tarnation, but I'm glad you're back!" he exclaimed. "I need somebody to cheer me up. How's Albany?"

The newcomer divested himself of his cloaks and wraps, disclosing the face and figure of Randolph.

"Gay and ungodly," he said cheerily, drawing nearer the fire, — "at least, so says Dominie Freylinghuysen. The town's at sixes and sevens over the performance of *The Beaux' Stratagem* and *The Recruiting Officer* — abominations say the pious, delightful say the profane. I've had a grand time, and I have news! *Great News!* GLORIOUS NEWS! — from Europe."

Like the flashing of fire from flint and steel a look of hope leaped into Barnaby's face at the word "news," only to die out again at the last phrase. "What is it, Charles?" he asked unsteadily, and sank back into his chair.

"King Frederick has performed the impossible!" Randolph cried, not noticing his friend's perturbation. "He has beaten the French, the Imperialists, the Austrians!"

"Faith, an' he must be like a catamount — worst when cornered!"

Randolph sat down and spread out his hands to the grateful blaze. "One must go back to Greece and Rome to find anything like it," he continued, his face glowing with enthusiasm. "Our ally was in even worse plight than we thought — said good-by to his friends — was almost ready to take the poison he carries in a hollow ring. But with twenty-five thousand men he whipped sixty thousand French and Imperialists at Rossbach."

Barnaby sprang up and began a jig. "Long live King

Fritz!" he shouted. "Down with the impresses an' Frinch concubines who're fightin' him!"

"The king then turned to Silesia. There all seemed lost, for Prince Charles of Lorraine with eighty thousand men bestrode the province like the Colossus of Rhodes. The Austrians were three to one, but Frederick staked all on a single battle. Prince Charles escaped into Bohemia with hardly thirty thousand men. The Russians have withdrawn to their dominions, and for the time being our grand old ally is safe."

"What call they the battle?"

"Leuthen; and I venture it will not soon be forgotten."

"Nor the man who won it! Why can't *we* have such generals?"

"The news from London is well-nigh as good," Randolph continued. "William Pitt is the real power in the new ministry; the duke but a figurehead. 'T is said that Pitt makes all about him braver men, and that he has sworn by God eternal that he will not consent to peace until he has humbled France, destroyed her commerce, and conquered her colonial empire."

"Amen to that! say I," interjected Barnaby.

"And I also. He means to conduct the war on the grand scale. He will assist Frederick, especially with money; and for America, 't is said, he has planned three expeditions. Sir Jeffrey Amherst, an able soldier, though a cautious one, is to take Louisburg and open the river gateway to Quebec, which he will attempt in turn if the season be not too late. Another army is to perform what Braddock failed to do. The commander is Brigadier Forbes, whom Major Heyward says is a Scotch physician turned soldier, to the advantage of the army and the loss of the medical profession. May he succeed where we failed!"

"If he does, there'll be some returnin' to the valley of

the Shenandoah," said Barnaby unsteadily. "'T is a beautiful region, Charles, though it's been a scene of sorrow for me an' mine."

"We ourselves, if I mistake not, will be moving down Lake George ere many weeks pass by, under Abercromby's banners against Ticonderoga and Crown Point."

"And what think you of our chances of victory?"

Randolph looked about the room as if to make doubly sure that they were alone. Then he said in a low voice: "If Abercromby were our sole commander, I should expect another disaster like Braddock's. But my Lord Howe will have the real direction of affairs."

"Faith, an' he's the man I'll follow," broke forth Barnaby enthusiastically. "He's no Braddock to think with his thimbleful of brains that he knows it all an' we Buckskins don't know nothin'. He's been on scouts with Rogers, an' all the men do be likin' him. He told Rogers that he was after Abercromby to have the men brown their musket barrels, cut their hair close, bob off their long coats so they won't be a-ketchin' on every bush, reduce every man, includin' the officers, to a blanket an' a bearskin for kiver, an' make the officers leave their servants, plate, an' all such truck behind."

"It would be God's blessing if he should succeed. Here's hoping he will, and that ere the leaves turn brown again Quebec may be ours. When that time comes, Barnaby, we'll find your boy."

Barnaby looked into his friend's face with an expression in his eyes that Randolph never forgot. They were blue eyes, honest and attractive, filled now with a great yearning.

"Pray God we may, Charles!" the father said, with quivering lip. "But most of the time I'm fearin'. Who knows where his curly head is laid this ravin' night — if he be livin'. New France is a vast country in which to

find one little boy. For hundreds of leagues along wild rivers and broad lakes the tribes rove hither an' yon, an' while I do be seekin' him at Quebec he may be far beyond Michilimackinac or towards Hudson Bay or among the canebrakes of Louisiana. See here."

He fumbled in his pocket and brought forth a little bag of deerskin, which he opened, disclosing a lock of curly brown hair.

"Tis me little boy's. Ellen cut it off before I started on the first trip to the Ohio," he said brokenly. "I would to heaven, Charles, that the two fiends who carried him away could stand face to face with you an' me!"

"An' I would to God they might!" Randolph cried, with a fierce intensity almost equal to his friend's. "Something tells me sometimes that we shall meet. Do not despair, old friend. If God wills it, you shall have your boy again. We are in His hands, and time at last makes all things even."

Before the end of the winter both Virginians had come to feel at home in their new commands. Randolph's fortune alone, without his many sterling qualities, would have insured him a favorable reception among his fellow officers; while Barnaby's good nature and the stories which Randolph was careful to tell of the Irishman's exploits on the border gained him both respect and popularity. When summer came and the army had assembled at the head of Lake George near the desolate site of Fort William Henry, there was a grand shooting match, in which representatives of all the various regiments and corps of rangers participated; and there was no happier man in the camp than Randolph (who himself stood third) when Barnaby won the prize offered by Lord Howe, beating even the redoubtable Rogers.

The Irishman's success doubtless had much to do with his being later intrusted with an important mission; but, for the moment, the matter was dismissed from mind, for more serious work than shooting at a mark was at hand. Randolph's information concerning English plans had been correct. On the early morning of the fifth of July the army, consisting of upwards of fifteen thousand men, of which the Sixtieth Regiment of Royal Americans formed a part, embarked in more than a thousand flatboats, whaleboats, and bateaux, and set out for the foot of the lake.

"What a spectacle!" cried Randolph, as he surveyed the scene. "'T is the largest army of white men ever gathered in North America. Braddock's army was an outpost beside it."

There was reason for his enthusiasm. The summer sun had just risen over the green summits of the craggy mountains and chased away the mists that night had gathered along the swampy shores. The silver sheen of the water was not marred by a single ripple; there was not breeze enough from the islet-studded lake to stir a blossom or a leaf. In regular precision the splendid pageant of boats, reaching almost from strand to strand, moved slowly northward. In the van went Rogers and his rangers; Gage and his light infantry with their strange caps, short jackets, and mustachioed faces; and the energetic Bradstreet, with his soberly clad boatmen and axemen. On the right and left and in the rear were the colonial troops, attired in uniforms of blue and red; in the center, the Royal Americans, the British regulars, the tartan-clad Forty-second Highlanders (the "Black Watch"), with claymores at their sides. Ten thousand oars as they rose and fell caught the sunlight. The air was filled with the notes of bugle, bagpipe, trumpet, and drum, caught up and prolonged by a hundred echoes of the narrow lake.

"Faith, an' it *is* worth comin' many a long mile to see," said Barnaby, in response to his friend's exclamation. "If our ginerals know their business, it will go hard with Mister Montcalm an' his *parley voos*."

Two days passed, and the noonday sun looked down upon the army debouching out of a thick forest into a clearing beyond which, on some rising ground, rose a breastwork of raw logs.

"T is a fearsome place to attack; I'm juberous of it," said Barnaby in a low voice, as he and Randolph stood at the head of their company, gazing over a tangled mass of fallen trees upon which the leaves were scarcely wilted at the flag-crowned breastwork. "One of the scouts told me that yesterday mornin' this was scarce begun, an' now look at it! If we'd kipt on the way we started, instid of backin' out like a crawfish just because we met a scoutin' party, we'd 've struck 'em before they were ready to entertain us. Look at the white hats peepin' over them logs! We'll get a pretty how-do-ye-do, or my name ain't Currin! They'll have many a fair pop at us 'fore ever we get through this bresh an' that divilish chevy-de-frizz. See how the breastwork winds in an' out so they can deliver a cross-fire. If Missus Nabbycromby cares for victory an' the lives of his soldiers, he'll bring up his cannon and batter down them logs, or else plant 'em over yonder on Rattlesnake Mountain an' take the White Hats from the rear. Or he might do a little flankin', 'stead of askin' us to butt our brains out agin them logs. But he's another damn fool like Braddock. Why could n't he have stopped that bullet yesterday instead of my Lord Howe?"

"We may carry it," Randolph protested, though at heart he felt as uneasy as did his lieutenant, for he knew that the unfortunate fall of the noble young lord in the

skirmish of the preceding day had left the direction of affairs in the hands of one in no way equal to the responsibility. When a few minutes later the colonel of the regiment asked for an officer to carry a message back to Abercromby at the Falls a mile away, Randolph sent Barnaby, rejoicing that his friend would thereby be removed from the dangers of the assault.

Presently the order was given to advance. Under the blazing sun Briton, Celt, and Provincial forced their way through the tangled chaos of fallen trees which disordered their ranks and delayed their progress. The bristling breastwork remained ominously silent until the first of the advancing troops neared the chevaux-de-frise, when a sheet of smoke and flame burst forth, and a storm of bullets and grape-shot swept through the ranks. Fearful as was the blast, the troops lived up to the best traditions of the British infantry. Falling by hundreds, they endeavored to push on against an enemy they could not reach, firing hasty volleys at an enemy they could not see, only to be brought to a pause by the impenetrable chevaux-de-frise. Behind their protecting breastwork the French took deliberate aim, and soon many a gay young officer whose routs and balls had not long since been a fearful joy to the simple folk of Albany hung a quivering corpse amid the withering leaves of the interlaced trees that formed the barrier. It was more than flesh and blood could stand. Slowly, defiantly, the survivors began to give ground.

Randolph was one of the last to leave the chevaux-de-frise. He was still desperately hacking at the impenetrable wall of sharpened branches and crying: "Forward, Royal Americans!" when a bullet entered his shoulder. Looking around him, he saw that his men were retiring, so he tottered after them. But he had not gone far when his strength gave way, and he fell to earth behind the prostrate trunk

of a great pine, which mercifully protected him from the pursuing bullets.

There he lay during the remainder of the battle. Again and again the British columns made their way through the labyrinth of fallen trees toward the breastwork, but always with the same result. An assault late in the afternoon upon the extreme right gave fleeting prospect of success, but was repulsed like all the others, despite the efforts of, the Highlanders, who in the woods of America displayed as great heroism for the House of Hanover as ever they had shown on their native heaths for the exiled Stuarts. Seized by a panic in which their senile commander shared, the army fled from the stricken field, leaving behind them nearly two thousand dead and wounded, and, taking to their boats, retired once more to the head of Lake George. But of all these lamentable things Captain Randolph, lying unconscious behind the great tree, remained blissfully unaware.

But his unconsciousness was not that of death. As the night waned, his brain cleared somewhat; and when the sun was well up in the heavens, he heard a voice that seemed strangely familiar exclaim:

"Aho! it is our young Virginian again."

Looking up, he beheld as in a dream a burly figure in the uniform of an officer of Canadian regulars. The face peering sardonically down upon him had but a single eye.

"*Pardonnez-moi, pardonnez-moi, monsieur*, if I disturbed your slumbers," the Frenchman exclaimed mockingly. "Tis a pity to awaken one who has so soft a couch."

"I am wounded," said Randolph, his senses as yet only half awake.

"In the prison in which we shall put him monsieur will have ample time to convalesce. I would with diffidence suggest that monsieur has a habit of being taken prisoner."

By this time Randolph was thoroughly alert. "There have been occasions when I was not taken prisoner, as some of your Indian devils had reason to know," he retorted. "What, Captain Reparti, as you hope for salvation, did you do with the boy?"

"Monsieur le capitaine is wounded; he must not excite himself," Reparti cried, simulating great concern. "It would be monstrous to tell him anything that would excite him. Monsieur must have perfect quiet."

Randolph turned his face away and made no answer.

"What is become of monsieur's lofty speeches?" Reparti persisted, unwilling to forego his triumph. "How shall I make his excuse to Mademoiselle de Saint-Pierre when next I see her?"

The Virginian looked his tormentor in the face. "Ah, so she is still mademoiselle," he said.

The shot told. Reparti flushed. Then he came closer, and, leaning down, whispered with the air of one imparting a confidence:

"Mademoiselle still, but she will not be long!"

"What have we here?" demanded a voice in French from behind Reparti.

Unperceived, two other officers had drawn near and stood looking down at the wounded soldier. One was a man of small stature, rather over than under forty years of age, quick of motion, with keen eyes and a handsome animated face, in which was writ authority but also benevolence. His companion was somewhat younger and more impassive of countenance, but with a certain expression that might be termed winning. Both wore uniforms which indicated that they were of high rank; Reparti saluted with the greatest respect.

"Why, my dear chevalier, 't is another wounded officer!" the older man exclaimed in tones of concern, not

waiting for Reparti to make any reply. "No doubt you were about to succor him, Captain Reparti. I trust," he continued to Randolph, in a voice that showed real concern and sympathy, "that you are not badly hurt, monsieur."

"A ball through my shoulder. I have bled much, but I have no intention of allowing this to be my last fight."

"Bravo! you have the *sang-froid*, monsieur. I am heartily glad that my *franc-tireur* missed the heart. 'T is a pity you had to lie here so long; but, while we remained in doubt regarding the further intentions of your army, we dared not send out a force to succor the wounded. We will try to make up for our remissness by our attention now. *Mes garçons*," he called to some white uniformed soldiers who were passing with a rude stretcher, "carry this officer to the hospital and see that his wound is dressed at once. Be as gentle as you can, *mes enfants*, for he is grievously hurt."

"Stay yet a moment," he continued, when the soldiers had lifted Randolph upon the litter. "What is your name, monsieur?"

"I am Captain Randolph of the Sixtieth Royal Americans. You, if I mistake not, are the Marquis de Montcalm."

"Your instinct does not deceive you, Captain Randolph; and this gentleman here is my other soul, the Chevalier de Lévis. Randolph . . . Randolph . . . it seems that I must have heard the name before."

"Is your Christian name Charles, and were you formerly of the Virginia regiment?" asked the chevalier, speaking for the first time.

"I am Charles Randolph, and until recently I was an officer in the Virginia regiment," was the puzzled answer.

"Ah, yes, now I have it!" cried Montcalm. "You are the cavalier who rescued Mademoiselle de Saint-Pierre

from the Iroquois, is it not so? I heard the story from mademoiselle's own lips; and be sure, monsieur, it lost nothing in the telling. Her father — God rest his soul! — was my old comrade in arms in the War of the Succession. Under the walls of Piacenza, when I was five times wounded, he slew the Croat who was about to give the finishing blow. So you have really put me in your debt, monsieur. The story of your exploit ran through all New France, and was still told even when the chevalier and I arrived a year and a half later. More than once I have heard fair ladies say they were glad you were not captured. But it is a cruelty to detain you longer. For the present, adieu. I shall assuredly seek you soon to see how you are faring."

Turning their backs on Reparti, who stood dumfounded at the turn affairs had taken, the marquis and the chevalier passed on. The soldiers carried Randolph round one end of the abatis into the camp to an extemporized hospital, where lay many other officers and soldiers, both French and English. As they passed through the camp, Randolph noted signs of rejoicing among the soldiers, and heard a group off duty singing:

*"Le Français comme l'Anglais
Prétend soutenir ses droits,
Voilà la ressemblance.
Le Français par équité,
L'Anglais par duplicité,
Voilà la différence."*

There were other verses still less pleasant for an Englishman to hear; yet Randolph, strangely exhilarated, managed not to mind them much, and found strength to endure the pain attendant upon binding up his wound.

Weak but conscious, he lay upon his rude couch thinking of the battle, of Reparti's cruel jibes, of the chivalrous general's kindly interest in a fallen foe. Then there rose

in fancy a fair young face, with roguish yet withal serious dark eyes — an image that had abided with him through all the turmoil of those trying years. Should he ever see that face again? Thank God, she had kept her promise! A smile lit up his pallid features — and the soldier slept.

CHAPTER XVII

OLD FRIENDS MEET AGAIN

THE weeks sped by; and one September morning Captain Randolph, fully recovered from his wound, entered a birch canoe about to depart from Carillon with dispatches for Quebec. He had given his parole, and had been ordered to the capital until he could be formally exchanged.

"I trust that you will not find your stay insupportable, monseur le capitaine," said Montcalm, who had done him the great honor to come down to the waterside to see him off. "There are some things in Quebec worth seeing, eh, monsieur? And do not forget to deliver my letter."

"You may trust me for that, monsieur le marquis," Randolph stammered, blushing at the raillery in the general's words.

Lieutenant Lusignan, the young officer who bore the dispatches, stepped into the canoe; the four boatmen pushed her off; last adieus were said; the voyage began. Some hours of steady paddling brought them in sight of the frowning walls of Fort St. Frédéric, where they paused for their midday meal. Re-entering the canoe, they passed on down the clear broadening bosom of Lake Champlain. To the eastward, beyond a band of forest-covered lowland, appeared the imposing summits of a range of green-black mountains; on the west the foothills of another range rose from the water's edge. Once they passed a fleet of bateaux carrying supplies to the army at Carillon; and now and again they saw canoes filled with befeathered warriors, who

were hurrying to their distant wigwams for the autumn hunting. Great flocks of wild pigeons darkened the sun; sturgeon leaped in the shallows; and occasionally some stag, come down to drink, surveyed the travelers from the untenanted shore. Slowly the sun dropped behind the western mountains; the shadows deepened; the fireflies lit their little torches; the cries of the loons grew more frequent and more weird. That night the travelers camped upon a rocky islet fringed by a beach of purest white sand, and quitted it again ere the morning sun had dispersed the veil of mist that hovered over the lake. So went the voyage.

"We draw near St. Jean," said Lieutenant Lusignan one afternoon, pointing to a clearing amid the pines and hemlocks of the western shore.

"What has become of the people who made the clearing?" Randolph asked.

"Killed by your allies, the Iroquois. See, there are the charred ruins of their cabin."

"Is it true, then, that the Six Nations have struck you?" said Randolph. "They have generally seemed indifferent, and some of the warriors of the western nations are known to be fighting under the *fleur-de-lis*."

"The Mohawks have taken the trail against us on a few occasions. As you say, the others wait to see which way fortune will incline. 'T is well for us they are inactive. For a hundred years, monsieur, they have been the scourge of New France. Hardly an *arpent* of land between here and Quebec has not been moistened by the blood of their victims."

"'T is a shame that we must set on the savages to do murder thus," said Randolph regretfully. "There are many scenes on our western border like those at which you hint."

The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders. "You are right,

monsieur," he said earnestly. "But we are all pawns in the hands of kings. *Voilà tout!*"

Quitting the quiet waters of Champlain, they entered the swift Richelieu, on whose banks stood many forts, some garrisoned, but others deserted stockades falling into ruin. The signs of war grew less evident, and they passed great seigniories peopled with a thrifty race of simple *habitants*. It was in the midst of harvest; but the crops were poor, and the labor of reaping was being performed by women and children and a few old men, who anxiously scanned the canoe when it came in sight.

"All the men who are strong must go to war or assist in transporting supplies," the lieutenant said, in explanation. "Our population is so small compared with yours that every man must fight or we should be overwhelmed at once. It is hard on the people. Already we have often been on short rations. Last winter we were reduced to eating the flesh of the horse. It caused riots, and I know not what would have happened had it not been for the address of the marquis and the chevalier, who shamed the mutineers into silence. Both regularly partook of the flesh themselves. The marquis gave a dinner of ten courses, and the Friend of Man figured in every course."

"What are the causes of this great scarcity?" asked Randolph, smiling.

"The blockade kept up by your cruisers is one. Ah, monsieur, if you conquer us, you must thank your navy for it! Few vessels reach us, and they are freighted chiefly with munitions of war. New France has never produced, even in times of peace, enough for her needs. And now there is the army to feed; the outside supply is cut off; there are not enough men to tend the fields; and scarcity is inevitable. But this is not all, monsieur. We have enemies within, *hélas!* more dangerous than English arms."

"Who are these enemies, monsieur?"

The lieutenant hesitated and glanced at the crew. Finally he leaned close to Randolph's ear and whispered: "That I dare not say. But when you come to Quebec, ask about La Grande Société and François Bigot!"

One pleasant day the canoe glided into the broad waters of the mighty river that gives outlet to the great inland seas of the Northwest. Down this river, through a region so low that it was uninhabited, through rush-infested Lac Saint-Pierre, past Trois Rivières, they paddled until they began to meet the tide, and the banks of the river grew steeper. At Becancourt they saw a squalid village of christianized Abenakis, who gazed longingly at the luxuriant locks of the young *Bostonnais*, for so the *habitants* called all Englishmen. Narrower grew the river, higher and more precipitous the cliffs that hemmed it in. One afternoon there loomed ahead a great promontory projecting far out into the stream.

"We draw near, monsieur," said the lieutenant eagerly.

Aided by both the current and the ebbing tide, they swept round the promontory, and before them on the vast rock rose the stone houses, spires, monasteries, palaces, gardens, and fortresses of old Quebec — the bulwark of New France.

"*C'est grand, n'est-ce pas?*" the lieutenant exclaimed. "I have seen most of the cities of Europe, but none are so majestic as this."

"You do not speak extravagantly," Randolph replied, gazing up at the gray precipice, whose brow was splendid in the sunlight. "'T is imposing, and, I doubt not, strong. He who sets foot in it a conqueror will have performed a feat that will bear comparison with the heroic deeds of antiquity."

"Ah, yes, monsieur. And when Quebec falls, good night to New France!"

Threading their way among the shipping, the crew soon brought the canoe alongside a quay, where the occupants were greeted by a noisy crowd of soldiers and sailors off duty.

"Why, it is Captain Randolph!" cried a familiar voice, and a stout gentleman clad in the uniform of a captain of the old Virginia regiment made his way excitedly through the press. He had a bullet-shaped head and a round hearty face that could belong to only one person in the world. A moment later Randolph was rapturously shaking the hand of Captain Jacob Van Braam.

"I vas expecting you, and here you vas already," said the Dutchman, before Randolph could speak. "Mine Cott, I vas glad to see you! I had of your vounding heard, also dot you vas petter, vas baroled, and vould soon to Quebec come. Dree tays haf I dot rifer vatched for you."

The greetings over, Van Braam explained that he had engaged lodgings for Randolph with his own landlord. After giving a *douceur* to the crew, and bidding good-by to Lieutenant Lusignan, toward whom he had begun to entertain a genuine attachment, Randolph announced that he was ready to follow. Van Braam, who seemed to be well acquainted with the lieutenant, whispered some words in his ear, whereat the lieutenant nodded and looked pleased. The Dutchman then led the way.

Randolph saw much that was new and strange to him. The lofty gabled houses of the Lower Town were of white-washed stone, with sharp French roofs of burnished tin like those of Liège. The way led past the market-place beside the little church called Notre Dame de la Victoire, so named sixty years before, after the failure of bluff Sir William Phips's attack upon the town. In the market-place

were many peasant dames in dingy jackets and short petticoats of coarse homespun, while here and there were a few swarthy male *habitants*, with their long queues, short pipes, leather breeches, and jackets of white frieze with blue fringes — all chattering like so many sparrows as they sold their vegetables, eggs, and capons to the housekeepers. Both peasants and townspeople stared long and hard at *les Bostonnais*; while black-robed Jesuits, gray-garbed Récollets, and nuns from the convent of the Ursulines glanced furtively at them in the narrow streets, and, crossing themselves, silently blessed God and the Holy Virgin for having seen fit to make prisoners of the heretics.

"'T is a far cry from Fort Necessity to where we are now," Randolph remarked, as the two began to climb the steep serpentine road that led up the cliff to the Upper Town.

"Four years, and you vas look much older, and I vas a hostage yet! Dose vere long years, mine friend, and not vidout droubles. Major Stobo peliefed dot de French de derms of our surrender fiolated. He sent blans of Fort Duquesne to Virginia, as you know. Dose babers vere found among the babers of de tead Praddock. Ve vere accused of peing sbies. Stobo vas contemned to pe hung. Mine Cott! I peliefed him lost! Dwice he esgaped, put vas regaptured. At last his sentence vas suspended. Py and py he vas released. How dime tragedg! No cheering news put from our ally, dot grand Frederick! Each year, ven de sbring come and de ice vas melted, ve vished hard for a Pritish fleet and army pefore Quebec. And now you vas come, put no fleet."

"Take heart," said Randolph optimistically. "In spite of our miscarriage at Ticonderoga, I believe the tide has turned. Now that Louisburg has fallen —"

"Ah, Louisburg!" Van Braam interjected. "Since I

heard dot news I vas a new man. I valks apout vid my head vonce more up; I looks all Frenchmans full in de face. Vat is it dot you vas hear apout dot victory?"

"Very little except that the fortress has really fallen, and that a red-headed, long-legged young brigadier named Wolfe was wherever there was most work to do."

"So I had heard also, and dot last I vill warrant to be drue. He vas, I dink, dot same Chames Wolfe dot fought in de regiment next mine at Dettingen. He vas a liddle ensign — a poy of seventeen. As de French charged, he valked vid his commanding officer town de front of de line knocking up de guns and delling de men not to fire dill the enemy vas close up. Chames Wolfe, dot vas de man!"

"I have great hopes that Forbes will do as well against Duquesne," Randolph continued. "Fort Frontenac at least is a hard blow."

"Fort Frontenac? Vat mean you?" Van Braam demanded.

"Why, have you not heard? We got the news at Trois Rivières on our way down the St. Lawrence. Colonel Bradstreet has captured it, with seventy cannon, all the French vessels on Lake Ontario, and all the goods intended for the western Indians. The West is now cut off and must die like a girdled tree, while hosts of Indians who have aided France will now fear to strike us."

Van Braam swelled up like a pouter pigeon. "Pless Cott!" he cried. "Dot vas good news. I vas nodice my French friends had long faces of lade!"

When they reached the top of the cliff, they paused beside the bishop's roomy residence to gaze down upon the river, the further shore, and the distant Isle of Orleans. As they moved onward again, Randolph's glance fell upon a large stone building overhanging the cliff on the left. It was surmounted by a mansard roof pierced with little

dormer windows, and in front was a spacious gallery on which a number of gentlemen in lace-trimmed clothes and wearing bejeweled swords were pacing up and down. Van Braam explained that the building was the Château de St. Louis, or palace, and that the gentlemen were waiting for a levee with the governor-general, the Marquis de Vaudreuil. Randolph also caught glimpses of the tower of the cathedral, of the College of the Jesuits, and of many other buildings and numerous spacious groves, orchards, courtyards, and gardens. He had time for only a glance at any of these sights, however, for presently, after passing many exquisitely gowned ladies who gazed with interest at the handsome young Virginian, they reached Van Braam's quarters in the whitewashed stone house of a bourgeois of the better class.

Randolph was introduced to the family, which consisted of the tradesman himself, his wife, and their daughter Louise. Monsieur Mercier was a quiet man, whose conversation was chiefly of the ruin which the war had wrought in his business; madame was middle-aged, but still inclined to gayety; and Louise was a pretty, pert young demoiselle, much given to spending her time frizzing and powdering her hair and to singing little *chansons* in which the words *amour* and *cœur* were used with remarkable frequency. She displayed great interest in the Virginian, and soon found opportunity to ask him the questions which the ladies of Quebec were accustomed to propound to travelers.

"Monsieur is perhaps married?" she asked, showing as she spoke the whitest of teeth.

"Unfortunately, mademoiselle, I am not so happy as you seem to infer," Randolph said, affecting great regret.

"It is not too late," she said coyly. "Do you not think the ladies of Quebec more beautiful than those of your own country?"

"I fear, mademoiselle, that as yet I am in no position to judge," Randolph said diplomatically. "With one exception, I have had no more than a glimpse at the charming ornaments of your city. But if the exception is representative, I am certain that our ladies would have cause for jealousy."

"*Ciel, but monsieur knows well how to pay the compliment!*" she cried, blushing with pleasure. "'T is evident *les Bostonnais* are a less barbarous people than we have been led to suppose. If monsieur thinks so well of the ladies of Quebec, he will doubtless be carrying one of them back with him to Virginia."

"Such an arrangement would give me the greatest happiness. But, alas, mademoiselle, you see before you only a poor prisoner! I fear that your fair ones would not deign to look with favor upon one so unfortunate, especially when he is an enemy."

"Our ladies have tender hearts, monsieur; you need not let that thought discourage you."

"*Eh bien, when I have made sure of my own return,* perhaps I shall consider whether to attempt to secure a companion for the voyage. 'T is a pleasant thought, mademoiselle; I am greatly indebted to you for having suggested it."

While they were in the midst of such badinage supper was announced. Upon coming into the dining-room, Randolph imitated Van Braam and rinsed his hands in a blue and white porcelain basin which stood on a pedestal in one corner of the room. Arrived at the table, he found his *couvert* to consist of a napkin, plate, silver goblet, fork, and spoons, but no knife, it being the custom of the country for the gentlemen to carry knives in their pockets, while the ladies wore theirs in sheaths of leather, silk, or birch-bark. Unaware of this usage, Randolph would have been

in some embarrassment had not Van Braam, who sat next him, slipped him a knife which he had been careful to secure against such an emergency. The food itself was all that could be wished, being prepared with the usual French skill, and served with some degree of elegance off vessels of silver and Delft ware.

In the course of the meal Randolph took advantage of a moment's lull in the conversation to ask Van Braam if he had received a certain letter relating to little Barnaby Currin.

"Your letter offering de great revard came to me afder some long vaidings," Van Braam answered. "Put I haf learned noddings. Dot child vas fanished combletely. No one has seen the chief Le Chat, and Reparti vill noddings dell. Mademoiselle de Saint-Pierre has many inquiries made so vell as I, put no news. Dere vas vone fine laty!"

"Is she well?" asked Randolph, striving not to betray too much interest.

"Aho, I knew dot question vould come!" the Dutchman laughed. "'De broof of gold is fire; de broof of vooman, gold; de broof of man, it vas a vooman,' says your Boor Richard. This," he continued to the Merciers in French, "is the gallant who rescued Mademoiselle de Saint-Pierre from the Iroquois. He wishes to know if she is well."

The family received the news with surprise; their interest in the newcomer was redoubled. Mademoiselle said something about "*un exploit très romantique*."

"She is vell, mine friend," said Van Braam, "and more charming dan efer. If I vere not an old man, I should long since haf mineself to her offered. As it vas, Captain Jacob Van Braam is, so to say, an admirer most tevoted! She is avare of your abroach, and vill velcome you to Quebec."

"I have a letter for her from the Marquis de Montcalm," said Randolph, making a notable effort to avoid enthusiasm. "I think it should be delivered this evening."

"It should pe telifered at vonce, vidout telay!" quoth Van Braam, with conviction. "I vill mineself guide you to her."

CHAPTER XVIII

IN THE DRAWING-ROOM

"DO you remember our preparations for the dinner at which we first met Mademoiselle de Saint-Pierre?" Randolph asked Van Braam, as they were dressing.

"Ven I mine clean shirt could not get into!" the Dutchman cried, roaring with laughter. "Mine Cott, how I rebroached mineself ven I vas seated next py such a laty! And yet lader I vas not sorry mine shirt vas loose."

"Where does mademoiselle live?" asked Randolph. "Her father's death must have been a sad blow to her."

"Ah, yes, a sad plow, as you say. She bined much ven she heard de news. She has her home made vid de La Vallières, a family of de *haute noblesse* and her relatives. De Marquis de Montcalm vas vonce her father's comrat-in-arms, and since his coming has almost a father peen. Ah, dere vas vone fine grand man! So considerate, so kind, so bious, and yet so great a soldier. New France lies in his keeping."

"Mademoiselle probably has many admirers?" queried Randolph.

"Lofers py pattalions. Mine Cott, from colonels to lieutenants, all vas mat apout her! Yet she vill none of dem. Venefer I sees vone bersistent more dan usual, I dells her dot I haf solemnly bromised dot she shall not marry until you haf seen her vonce again."

"Oh, and what answer does she make to that?"

"She says: 'Captain Randolph is a gallant shentleman. He safe me from *les peaux rouges*. *Mon Dieu!* I could

not pear to tisoblige a so good friend of his.' And soon I see dot atmirer vid a long face and a look most tisconsolate!"

"Does Reparti still trouble her?"

"Venefer he vas in Quebec. She dry to keep avay from him; put, mine Cott! he vas like a cur tog dot you cannot lose! De Marquis de Vaudreuil and François Bigot, the intendant, are to him friends; and all are in vone grand blot to enrich demselfes py knafery. I half pelieve dey vould combel her to marry him, put Montcalm brodects her."

When they were about to set out, Van Braam took a pistol, and, after examining the priming, put the weapon underneath his cloak. Then he handed another to Randolph. As both wore swords, the Virginian asked the cause of this precaution.

"Ven a shentleman goes aproad in such a city, he cannot ofer cautious pe," Van Braam replied, as they stepped into the street. "You, in bardicular, vas not unlikely to pe in some tanger here. Captain Reparti has not your liddle quarrel forgot, you may pe sure. Pesides, he may dink you haf some bart blayed in his lofe affair failure."

A few minutes' walk brought them to the residence of the La Vallières, a spacious stone house, with dormer windows and a high-pitched roof, not far from the palace of the governor-general. Randolph noticed that it commanded a view of the river, and that connected with it was an extensive garden filled with trees.

They were ushered by a servant into the drawing-room, where Van Braam presented Randolph to the Baron La Vallière, a little old man with a hooked nose and keen gray eyes. The baron's hair was curled, powdered, and tied in a queue; and he wore a green velvet frock coat, embroidered waistcoat, knee breeches, silk stockings, high-

heeled buckled shoes, and a sword with a richly bejeweled scabbard. He walked with a decided limp, the result, Randolph learned later, of a wound received in the last war. Randolph next had the pleasure of meeting the baron's daughter Toinette, a piquant, elegantly dressed beauty, with somewhat the air of a coquette. The other persons in the room were Lieutenant Lusignan and Alfrede de Saint-Pierre; and if Randolph's eyes rested mostly upon the girl, it should be remembered in his behalf that four years had elapsed since he said good-by to her outside the walls of Fort Presqu'isle. Time had made little change in her save that her form had acquired a more womanly fullness and her bearing the added grace of greater dignity. She wore a gown of some rich stuff, cut modestly décolleté, leaving the shoulders bare, and having short puffed sleeves and full flowing skirt. Her profuse dark hair was surmounted by an aigrette set with brilliants, and was arranged in little curls, one of which fell clusteringly upon the lovely curve of her neck and shoulder. About her neck was a necklace of pearls. In her face there was a fresh glow of health and youth. Laughter still lurked in the dark eyes beneath the superbly arched brows, and the melting voice which came from between the curved red lips seemed as capable as ever of imperious commands or delicious teasings. A glance was enough to convince Randolph that in his dreams he had not idealized her.

After the salutations were over Randolph turned to Lusignan and said: "Ha, lieutenant, I am agreeably surprised at seeing you again so soon."

"*Ma foi!* I am not at all surprised to see you — especially now that I know that you are the same Randolph of whom I have heard so much," the lieutenant replied, in a tone of good-humored raillery.

"Oh, Lieutenant Lusignan is a fixture when he is in town,"

said Mademoiselle La Vallière, in affected scorn. "He troubles us continually."

"T is not altogether his fault that he is here at present, Mademoiselle Toinette," protested Van Braam in French. "I could tell a story if I chose."

"*Chut!*" the girl exclaimed, shaking her fan menacingly at Van Braam. "All messengers should be stricken dumb after they have delivered their messages."

"*Merci,* Capitaine Van Braam!" said the lieutenant, smiling.

"As for you, Captain Randolph, I have been expecting you from the moment we heard you had arrived. I am most happy that you have come. Not a day passes but Alfrede says something about the wonderful Virginian who saved her from *les peaux rouges*."

"Toinette!" cried Alfrede reproachfully.

"Oh, well, if you did not say it, you thought it, which is the same!"

"How is your wound, Captain Randolph?" asked Alfrede shyly.

"I have none now, mademoiselle, except it be to my vanity."

"You ought to be thankful for your good fortune, monsieur," said Toinette challengingly. "No Englishmen except captives ever enjoy the delights of life in Quebec."

"Only the gates of Louisburg and Frontenac are open to free ones, I believe."

"Certainly the gates of Carillon are not," she retorted quickly.

Randolph made an exaggerated bow. "I admit myself beaten," he said gallantly. "If French generals were as ready in military expedients as mademoiselle with her wit, even the gates of Frontenac and Louisburg would not have swung wide to us."

"*Ma foi !* 't is well that your generals are not Virginians, else they would conquer us with compliments," she said sarcastically.

"Peace! peace!" interposed the baron, laughing. "Ste. Anne! have we not enough war without carrying it into our drawing-rooms? We are glad to welcome you to Quebec, Captain Randolph; we can almost find it in our hearts not to regret your wound because it brought you to us. Our good friend here"—indicating Van Braam—"when he heard you were out of danger, at once began to rejoice over your capture, saying that you would be sent here, where he could see you. You have a stanch friend, monsieur, in Captain Van Braam. He has told us only the good things about you."

"*Eh bien,* he has a little of de *duitel* in him, but rarely lets him out," Van Braam admitted amid laughter.

Randolph adroitly shifted the attention to Lieutenant Lusignan. "It was as a reward for his great valor that he was chosen to bring the dispatches to Quebec. I suspect he was not sorry to come, eh, lieutenant?"

It was now Lusignan's turn to blush.

"I admit I do not find Quebec dull," he said.

Presently, through the workings of those invisible agencies natural to such situations, the little group split up into three parts, of which, needless to say, Toinette and the lieutenant formed one, Van Braam and the baron another, and Randolph and Alfrede the third.

"It has been a long time since we saw each other," said Randolph a trifle unsteadily, when the two were comfortably settled in a corner. "First let me say with what regret I heard of your father's death. Colonel Washington, Captain Van Braam, and I formed the highest opinion of him both as a soldier and as a gentleman. I have heard

officers admit that if he had not fallen when he did, Dieskau might not have been defeated."

"You are kind," she said gratefully. "His loss was almost more than I could bear."

"I hope that sometime you may see his resting-place," he said gently. "When I was stationed at Fort Edward, I sought it out and had a stone raised to mark it. 'T is in a spot such as a soldier might choose for his burial place."

Her eyes grew liquid. "I shall never forget your good deed, never!" she murmured.

"I must not forget," he said presently, "that I was intrusted with a letter to you from the Marquis de Montcalm."

"Oh, good!" she cried. "The marquis was my father's old comrade. His children and I were playmates. No one could be kinder to me than he has been. Have you the letter with you?"

"To be sure," he said, and handed it to her.

She took it eagerly, and he noticed with a thrill how round and beautiful was the arm she held out for it.

"May I read it?" she asked.

He consented willingly enough. She broke the seal, and rapidly scanned the contents. As she did so, a flush of added color came into her face, and she laughed merrily.

"Why, 't is mostly about you!" she cried. "I wonder if I dare read it to you?"

"Do, by all means! I feel flattered at being noticed, though all he may say is uncomplimentary."

After some hesitation she found the courage to comply, and this is what she read:

CARILLON, the 2nd September, 1758.

"MADEMOISELLE,—Long before this you will have heard of the glorious victory won, thanks be to the good God, by the troops under my command. Among the trophies of the

battle is the bearer of this letter, whom, unless my memory plays me false, you have met before. He is a personable cavalier, and behaved in the action with great gallantry. You may use him during the coming winter as a parlor ornament, being careful to treat him kindly and let nothing about him be broken that is not mendable. As he is our enemy, punish him somewhat, but not too much.

"You will rejoice with me at hearing that the news from my beloved Cadiac is the best. Madame and our daughters in their letter ask to be remembered to you. Oh, *bon Dieu!* when shall I see again my château, my plantations, my chestnut grove, my oil mill, my mulberry trees, my wife, my children? May God preserve my dear ones and make them prosper in this world and the next. The number is large for such a moderate fortune, but does God ever abandon His children in their need?

*Aux petits des oiseaux il donne la pâture
Et sa bonté s'étend sur toute la nature.*

I shall always say — Happy he who is free from the proud yoke to which I am bound and lives in the obscure state where the Gods have placed him. *Bon soir, ma chère enfant,* my compliments to your friends. I have the honor to be with respect,

"Your very humble and obedient servant,
"MONTCALM."

"Poor marquis!" Alfrede exclaimed. "He loathes this war as much as I. It is almost three years since he has seen his home and family, and he is always longing for them. But he will not leave New France while she needs him. He is a hero, monsieur, a hero! He comes of a race of heroes of which it is the common saying, 'War is the tomb of the Montcalms.' Where have you a man such as he?"

"We have one at least, mademoiselle, though he is young and not yet in high command."

"Who is he?" she demanded.

"Colonel Washington," he said, with conviction. "No soldier could display greater heroism and self-sacrifice amid discouraging conditions than he has done in defending our western frontier."

"I remember that I thought him a man one could trust," she said. "He seemed a sober man for one so young."

"He is extremely practical, and perhaps somewhat lacking in imagination. I recall that on our trip to Fort Le Boeuf — where I first had the happiness of meeting you — Captain Van Braam, Lieutenant Currin, and I would sometimes, upon reaching a mountain top, stand for several minutes exclaiming over the beauty of a river beneath. Washington would then be able to give us an intelligent estimate of the number of arable acres in the valley."

"Has he no sentiment whatever?"

"I would not say that. He has, to my knowledge, been mildly in love a number of times with our own Virginian beauties; and in New York I learned that while he was in that city on his way to consult Lieutenant-General Shirley in Boston, he had an incipient affair with the daughter of one of the great patroons of the province. Under the influence of the gentle passion he has even been known to indite poems. The last verses of one such run thus:

'Ah! woe's me, that I should love and conceal,
Long have I wished, but never dared reveal,
Even though severely Love's Pains I feel;
Xerxes that great, was 't free from Cupid's Dart,
And all the greatest Heroes felt the Smart.'

There is no man living I love and honor more, and I ought to say that all his verses were written when he was in his teens. Long ago he wisely perceived that he was

intended for a soldier, not a poet. God knows he has had enough since that time to make him grave!"

"How do you like the prospect the marquis holds out for you?" inquired Alfrede archly, after a pause.

"I ask no better fate," he said, gazing ardently into her eyes. "Only you must heed his warning, for I have something that could be broken — something not mendable and that only one woman in the world could break."

She looked up at him from beneath long lashes, and he knew that she understood. Her eyes fell. He noticed that her lips trembled, nor were his much firmer.

"I wept much over your letter about the little boy," she said, after a silence. "Terrible things have been done in this conflict by both combatants, though I fear that because most of the savages have been on our side my country will have most to answer for. I have done what I could, but, *hélas!* I have learned next to nothing. Le Chat and he have disappeared. Tis said by some that the chief is in the region of the Upper Lakes."

"What does Captain Reparti say?"

"I have asked him twice. Once he pretended to have no knowledge. Another time he promised to redeem the child if I would grant him one request."

"And what was that?" asked Randolph, half guessing the answer.

She hesitated. "That I should marry him," she said, looking down.

"Alfrede, that must never be!" he cried. "Some time we shall find the child. Before God, I would pledge my fortune for his ransom, but you must not do that."

"Peace will come soon," she said; "perhaps then he can be found."

"It cannot come too soon for me, but why do you think it is at hand?"

"I can be frank," she said, "for soon you will see for yourself. New France cannot fight much longer. The court has deserted us. Oh, it is shameful! A hundred thousand men can be furnished to fight the battles of Austria and of La Pompadour in Germany, but no troops and few supplies can be spared to save a continent for France. In spite of brilliant victories—won by the genius of Montcalm—we stand on the brink of ruin. Food is scarce; the suffering of the people in winter is pitiable. The colony is split into two factions. Vaudreuil, who is Canadian born, is jealous of Montcalm—the man who for three campaigns has kept us from destruction—and does all he can to thwart him. Alas! the governor has opportunities. Montcalm commands only the troops from France, and technically is subordinate to Vaudreuil, who, however, is fortunately afraid to take the field in person. Worst of all, the intendant, who in many ways is the most powerful man in the province, is the leader of a pack of wolves who are eating out the very heart of New France."

A sound of laughter and of many voices came from the street. All ran to the window and looked out. From the direction of the palace came a dozen richly dressed men and women, their way lighted by servants in livery carrying flaming flambeaux. In front was an exquisitely gowned woman of great beauty, arm-in-arm with a short splotchy-faced man.

"Madame Péan!" said Toinette, in tones of disapproval. "She has had too much wine."

"*Oui, La Belle Sultane,*" said Lieutenant Lusignan; "but she cares not. She is lost to shame."

"Who is the gentleman with her?" asked Randolph.

"That," said Alfrede slowly, "is François Bigot, intendant, and Evil Genius of New France."

CHAPTER XIX

THE HIRELINGS

A N hour later Van Braam and Randolph were on their way homeward. The night was clear but moonless, and from a ridge over which their road passed they could look down upon the broad shimmering Basin of Quebec and the distant shores beyond.

"Dose," said Van Braam, pointing to some lights that twinkled far down the river, "are in villas and farmhouses on de Isle of Orleans, vere in summer many families of wealth redire. Dose across de rifer and so much nearer are on Point Lévis. If dot dime efer comes ven an enemy addempts Quebec, it is dere he vill his patteries erect. He vill not dake de city py his pomppardment, put he vill testroy it."

"Do you think the town can ever be taken?" asked Randolph. "Nature has done her best for it; and, to judge from the batteries I saw today, man also has been busy."

"No blace vas efer so strong dot it vas impregnable, no more dan any woman vas broof against de vooings of de right shentleman," quoth the Dutchman sagely.

"Hold!" exclaimed Randolph in a low voice, suddenly stopping short. "Do you see that fellow skulking in the shadow of yonder trees? I would almost swear that he is following us."

Van Braam stopped and looked back in the direction indicated. There was, in truth, a man in the shadow;

but while they stood looking he advanced some distance in their direction, and then turned down a side street so unconcernedly as to disarm suspicion.

"Doubtless his interest was mere curiosity," said Randolph. "I suppose your preparations before we started have made me unduly suspicious."

"It vas no harm to pe vatchful," said Van Braam.

They walked on and drew near the spacious convent of the Ursulines, from whose chapel came the pealing tones of a great organ mingled with the voices of the nuns celebrating midnight service for the safety of New France.

"De air of Quebec vas vid incense of vorship heafy," said Van Braam, who as a descendant of men who held Leyden against the hosts of Alva, had no fondness for things Catholic. "Briests and nuns vas eferyvere. If braying vas any goot, ve shall New France nefer gonquer, and no Frenchman vill efer so much as a liddle smell of burgadory daste. Somedimes I vas combleteley dired of so much brocessions, so much braying. I vas not religious much, put often haf I longed to hear goot Dominie Heijn of Amsterdam breach once more."

By the time Van Braam concluded his observations they were past the convent and were approaching the home of a bourgeois where a dance was in progress. From the open doors streamed shafts of light, and the strains of violins mingled with the rhythmical sound of many feet dancing a quadrille. Presently the violins were drowned by lusty voices singing a folk song:

*"Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre,
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine,
Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre,
Ne sait quand reviendra.*

*"Il reviendra-e-d Pâques,
Mironton, mironton, mironlaine,
Il reviendra-e-d Pâques
Ou à la Trinité.*

*"La Trinité se passe,
Mironton, mironton, mironlaine,
La Trinité se passe,
Malbrough ne revient pas."*

"A gay and a habby beoble," said Van Braam contemptuously. "Shoost like all Frenchmans. Vere Quebec to fall domorrow, dey vould laugh and sing and tance next tay like grasshoppers. Mine Cott! pevare!"

There was reason for his exclamation. They had passed the scene of gayety and were abreast of a spacious garden filled with trees and shrubbery. Out of a dark gateway had sprung three men with drawn swords. It would probably have gone hard with the two friends had not the foremost ruffian, in his haste, stumbled over a protuberance in the rocky street and fallen in front of his companions, momentarily checking their progress. Van Braam, who was much quicker on such occasions than is usual in one so phlegmatic, drew his pistol, and, cocking it, shot the second man through the body.

"Bravo, captain!" cried Randolph.

He had already drawn his own sword, and now received the onset of the third ruffian. The stars furnished but feeble light, and it was only his fencer's instinct that enabled him to turn aside the furious thrusts aimed at him. His assailant was exceedingly tall and long armed, but soon showed himself an indifferent swordsman. After foiling the first attack, Randolph himself took the offensive. Presently, by a strong parade, he sent the fellow's weapon flying into the middle of the street, and in an instant had his own threatening the man's throat. Meanwhile the

first ruffian, seeing the turn affairs were taking, scrambled to his feet, and, disregarding his companion's urgent cries of "*À moi, mon camarade, en avant*, to the rescue!" ran off down the street at such a pace that it was useless for the irate but weighty Van Braam to follow.

"What in the devil does this mean, you rascal?" demanded Randolph of his captive, whom he proceeded to seize by the collar, at the same time keeping his point against the skin. "Why do you attack strangers in this manner?"

"Mercy! mercy! seigneur, as you hope for heaven!" begged the man abjectly, showing that he was as cowardly as he was treacherous.

"Run him drough, tamn him!" exclaimed Van Braam vindictively.

Groveling upon the ground, the captive repeated his plea for clemency.

"You deserve to die, but I will release you on one condition," said Randolph, — "that you tell me who instigated this attack."

"*Hélas!*" the prisoner cried. "I do not know his name. He is a heavy man with a vast wart on his nose. He was to give us each two hundred *livres*. We be poor men, seigneur, ruined by the war. Pity my wife and little ones!"

The man's voice had the ring of truth; but Randolph stood undecided whether to release him or turn him over to the watch, who, attracted by the shot, were running up. His indecision was resolved by the fellow's suddenly twisting out of his grasp like an eel and dashing off. A quick thrust would probably have brought him to the ground, but the Virginian mercifully forbore giving it, and also neglected to make use of his pistol, with which he might have managed to wing the fugitive.

Half a dozen of the watch now came up, bearing lighted flambeaux.

"Give up your weapons, messieurs," said the officer in charge.

"Why?" Randolph demanded in French. "We but defended ourselves against the ruffians."

Van Braam also vigorously protested, insisting that it would be an outrage to arrest gentlemen whose only offense was that they had defended themselves against assassins.

Meanwhile two of the watch were turning over the fellow on the ground. He was quite dead, with a great bloody hole in his breast.

"*Pardieu, c'est Le Rat!*" cried one of them, after a look at the dead man's face. "He will rob no more!"

The exclamation drew the attention of the other watchmen. A careful scrutiny convinced all that the body was indeed that of a celebrated highwayman who had long been the terror of the city.

"*Parbleu! messieurs les Anglais,* this gives the encounter a different look," said the officer apologetically. "We owe you thanks instead of an arrest. The rascal has escaped us for months. He has committed half a dozen murders and twice that many robberies. You are free to go whenever you wish."

Greatly relieved by the turn affairs had taken, Randolph and Van Braam bade the officer good-night and proceeded to their lodgings, carrying with them food for considerable reflection.

CHAPTER XX

A SEIGNIORY OF THE OLD RÉGIME

“TOMORROW the Baron La Vallière intends to take Toinette and me to his seigniory up the St. Charles,” said Alfrede to Randolph one afternoon, as they were walking in the garden. “He has asked me to invite you and Captain Van Braam to go with us.”

“Since you are to be in the party, I accept with pleasure,” said Randolph, with a look that brought the blushes to her face.

“T is the day when his *censitaires* pay their *cens et rente*,” she explained. “On most baronies this ceremony takes place on St. Martin’s day, but on his it is earlier. You are to come at six for breakfast — provided you can get up in time.”

Randolph vowed that he would not be tardy, and kept his word. The hour named found him and Van Braam entering the La Vallière mansion.

“*Bonjour! bonjour!*” the baron exclaimed heartily, limping forward to meet them. “Ste. Anne! you do me a rare honor!”

“It is you who confers the honor,” insisted both Randolph and Van Braam.

“I have often wished to visit one of the great estates of New France and see how it is conducted,” continued Randolph. “Anything that pertains to farming is always interesting to a Virginian.”

"Doubtless your agriculture is very different from ours," the baron observed, taking a pinch of snuff from his *tabatière*. "All the world uses Virginia *tabac*. This snuff is some of it. Perhaps it was grown on your own plantation."

"Possibly. If it was, I hope you find it good. Tobacco is our chief product, but we grow much wheat and maize also. Most of the labor is performed by slaves, though we have what we call indentured servants. I must confess that most of us are poor farmers. We do not attend enough to little things, and we leave too much to others. However, there are exceptions among us. My neighbor, Colonel Washington, keeps an itemized account of receipts and expenditures and oversees everything himself."

"Rooning de fox vas de vay most Virginia blanters deir farming do," volunteered Van Braam. "Ven dey vas not hunting dey vas visiting. I vas know vell a Captain Mason and a Mr. Harrison. On Montays Captain Mason he visit Mr. Harrison. Dey hunt or fish or smoke and dalk dill Vednestay, ven Captain Mason ride home. On Durstay Mr. Harrison he go to Captain Mason's house, vere he stay dill Suntay. So it vas de year rount. Put mine frient here he vas not so itle — alvays."

While they were still laughing over Van Braam's pleasantries, Lieutenant Lusignan arrived and received a hearty greeting from the baron and a more formal one from Toinette. All then passed into the dining-room and there partook of a light breakfast of rolls, white wine, and coffee. Quaint *calèches* were then brought to the door, and the whole party, including old Jeanne, entered them. Soon they had passed out of the St. John's gate, and, after skirting the plateau known as the Côte Ste. Geneviève, took the road to Lorette and made their way up the picturesque valley of the St. Charles.

It was the kind of day when everything appears *couleur*

de rose, and it seems good to be alive. The sky was clear, and the air was just cool enough to render grateful the early rays of the September sun. The narrow road led through a grove of tall white pines, the endless vista of whose tapering trunks seemed like the columns of some vast dream-born cathedral, all towering aloft to the vault of green above. A gentle west wind sighing through the woods stirred the smooth brown carpet of the forest floor and brought to the beholders the fragrant breath of the pines.

At the point where the road turned away from the St. Charles, the *calèches* halted before a great wooden cross reared beside the highway. Set into the upright piece was a square of glass, behind which stood a wax image of Christ on the tree, surrounded by hammer, tongs, nails, and flasks of vinegar.

"You will find such crosses along every highway in New France," said Alfrede to Randolph. "T is the custom for every good Catholic to pause for a moment and say a little prayer before each."

All alighted, and, with the exception of Randolph and Van Braam, performed their devotions. Randolph felt touched as he gazed at the slender forms of the two beautiful girls devoutly kneeling in the sunlight before the rude cross as they paid their reverent homage. The sight of "popish practices," which as a child he had been taught to abhor, aroused in his heart no feeling of hostility.

The *petites prières* made, the party drove on, and in an hour drew near their destination. The château stood upon a ridge commanding an extensive view of the surrounding country. It was a long low structure, surmounted by overhanging gables and a steep roof, with a group of outhouses, stables, and sheds clustering near by. A little apart, beside a stream that went stumbling down the hillside, was a

massive stone mill. Beyond straggled the quaint village of the *habitants*, with its little cross-surmounted church, and, not far away, a gallows and a pillory.

"Baron La Vallière is one of the few Canadian seigneurs who retain the power to execute the High Justice, the Middle, and the Low," said Alfred, noticing that Randolph's eyes dwelt upon these last-mentioned objects. "The gallows is kept up merely as a warning to evildoers; but many a hardened *coquin* has occupied the pillory."

The seigneur showed his guests about the estate and explained to Randolph how it was managed. The barony was, in fact, a reflection in the New World of the feudalism then still existing in some parts of the Old. The baron's ancestor had received from the Crown a grant of a vast tract of land; and he, in turn, had granted parts of it to the *habitants*, who were technically known as *censitaires* — that is, for their holdings they were obliged to make certain returns in labor, money, and produce. In addition, they must pay for the privilege of grinding their corn in the lord's mill and of baking their bread in the lord's oven, and must give him one fish out of every eleven caught. The individual holdings were in long narrow strips, combining the advantage of arable ground for meadows and cultivation with forests for firewood and timber. This accounts for the long ribbon-shaped farms still noticed by travelers in parts of Lower Canada.

"T is an easy tenure for the people," said the baron, "immeasurably more so than those in France; yet the seigneurs have difficulty in securing tenants. In times of war the men must fight; and in times of peace they run off to the woods and become lawless *coureurs-de-bois*. Sometimes so many of the men are away in the wilderness that, by Ste. Anne! there are not enough to marry the

young girls. Many seigneurs have grown so poor that they have turned fur-traders, or even sunk to the condition of the *habitants*. More than once I have seen the daughters of seigneurs plowing in the fields."

"*Mon Dieu!*" cried Toinette, holding up her dainty hands in affected horror, "imagine me holding a plow!"

"You would do it most charmingly," said Lieutenant Lusignan gallantly. "When that time comes, I shall turn plowman."

Presently they paused before the mill. It was a stone structure, two stories high and surmounted by a flat roof, which was surrounded with battlements, so that its general appearance was not unlike that of a small feudal castle.

"We are very proud of our mill," said the baron. "As you will remark, it is loopholed for musketry. In 1690 my father with fifteen *censitaires* from behind its walls held a hundred Iroquois at bay for three days. In the final assault a mob of the naked demons gathered here before the door and endeavored to beat it in with their hatchets. The women had kept a kettle of boiling water ready for such a contingency, and poured it down upon their heads. I was but a child of three at the time; but, Ste. Anne! I can still hear them howling as the water struck them! They attempted no further attack, and next day succor arrived from Quebec."

"Dot vas remint me of somedings dot habben to me," said Van Braam reminiscently. "It vas ven I vas fighting Maréchal Saxe. A barty of Dutch and English, of vich I vas vone, a yet smaller barty of French in a farmhouse addacked. Dwice ve vere pack trif'en from de front of de house. Den I a tozen men to de rear led. I climb a latter and vas apout to enter a vindow, ven peholt! a good vrouw vid a pucket! '*Va-t-en!*' she cry, and straight come dot vater in mine face. It vas not hot, put, *donder* and *bliksem*,

it dake many a draught of goot peer from my mouth dot
daste to vash oudt!"

"And did you capture the farmhouse?" asked Alfrede.

"Mademoiselle," asked the Dutchman reproachfully, "do
you tink Jacob Van Braam vas efer so imbolite as to obbose
de vishes of a laty?"

"Here in the door you can still see the marks of the
bullets and of the hatchets," resumed the baron, when the
laughter had subsided.

"The mill is a strong place yet," said Randolph, examining
the marks with curious eye. "A few determined men
could still hold it against many, though I doubt not the
door is much weaker than once it was."

Soon after dinner a quaint procession began to wend its
way toward the château. It consisted of a few men,
mostly old, and many women, carrying bags of grain, live
capon, baskets of eggs, strings of fish, and other produce.
Soon the grounds in front of the château presented an
animated spectacle. The men smoked prodigiously; the
women chattered like so many magpies; and the captive
fowls, though their feet were fastened, made the most of
the fact that their throats were free.

"T is as noisy as a Virginia court day," commented
Randolph, "but far more peaceable and polite. In such
an assemblage as this in Virginia there would be a dozen
fights in the course of the day. And if a French prisoner
were present, he would constantly be surrounded by a jeer-
ing crowd."

"Perhaps that is because French prisoners are so rare in
Virginia," suggested Alfrede, wickedly.

"For shame, Alfrede!" chided Toinette. "I think the
curé yonder" — she pointed to an old priest in a rusty
cassock — "has much to do with their good behavior. He
is universally beloved and has much influence. Our

habitants are quarrelsome sometimes. But now most of the young men are with the army."

"Ah, yes, how few men there are, indeed!" exclaimed Alfrede. "In times of peace, Captain Randolph, this assemblage would be mostly men. Now it is mostly women. But look! the ceremony is about to begin."

The baron seated himself in an armchair behind a table, on which lay open the *censier* in which were inscribed the terms of each holding. Seeing that his lord was ready, a grizzled *censitaire*, the oldest man present, advanced before his fellows with a sack of grain. Baring his head, he knelt before the baron and cried out:

"Baron La Vallière! Baron La Vallière! Baron La Vallière! I bring you the faith and homage which I am bound to bring you in consideration of my fief Du Buisson, which I hold as a man of faith of your *seigneurie* of La Marck, declaring that I now offer to pay my seigneurial dues and demanding that you accept my faith and homage. The labor of five days upon your demesne, which is part of my contract, has been duly performed. I bring here the two *minots* of wheat for the *arpents* I hold, and the ten francs that complete my payment."

"Rise up, Pierre Michaud," said the baron, "your obligation is discharged. You have always been a faithful tenant, *mon enfant*."

The next to step forward was a woman carrying a basket of eggs and two lean capons. She was old, her cap and short ragged petticoat looked older, and her face was as brown and wrinkled as a frosted persimmon. Kneeling as had the *censitaire* who preceded her, she pronounced the same formula, adding: "I am here in place of my son, Henri Du Some, who is with the troops at Carillon. Monseigneur, here be a basket of eggs and two capons. *Hélas*, it is not enough, for I have not the money and the grain!"

Before seedtime my two *garçons* were ordered to the war. One was killed with M. de Langy. He was a brave *garçon*, and my eldest. It has been a hard year and a sad one, monseigneur. I be near to starvation already; and, *mon Dieu*, what I shall do when winter comes, I know not!"

"*N'importe*, Suzanne Du Some," said the baron kindly. "Your father stood with mine in the mill and did not flinch. By Ste. Anne! do I not remember how you and I and the other *enfants* cowered down in the corner of the mill shivering at the screeches of *les peaux rouges* without? Keep your fowls and eggs, and take also this bag of wheat which Pierre has brought. Your need is greater than mine."

"And take this also," said Randolph, stepping forward and dropping a sovereign into the old creature's wrinkled palm. "I fought against your sons, madame; who knows but that it was Henri who wounded me and caused me to fall a captive? But I wish you well, and I hope that Henri comes back to you."

There was a murmur of approval in the crowd, and the old curé said:

"Do God and the Saints ever abandon the needy? Forget them not, Suzanne Du Some. They will bless you both for these benefactions, monseigneurs."

"I prayed to the Virgin and Ste. Anne de Beaupré," said Suzanne. "They heard my cry."

With words of thanks to the Baron and Randolph, she hobbled away and gave place to a short fat *censitaire*, with dirty greasy hands and unkempt clothes. He was empty-handed, and told a long story of lameness and the failure of his crops. To prove the first part of his story he hobbled back and forth in front of the baron.

"*Pardieu!* Jacques Marmette," the baron shrieked, his eyes glittering, "do you think to impose on *me*, you lazy beggar! I know how you escaped fighting on the same

lying plea. *Va-t-en*, you dirty rascal! Have your payment here within the hour, or a thousand devils will not save you from the stocks! I expect some day to hang you on the gallows!"

Forgetting his pretended lameness, the fellow, with a black look on his face, hurried off as fast as his fat legs would carry him, and gave place to other tenants, many of whom told true stories of poverty and hardship.

"The wolf is at our doors," said one old *censitaire*, bolder than the rest. "The war has ruined us. Most of our horses were killed by order of the intendant. Only a little grain could be sowed, for women and old men are weak. Even what we have harvested is soon to be taken from us in the king's name by the intendant's agents. *Mon Dieu!* I know not how many of us will be alive when the flowers bloom again!"

The baron swore his favorite oath under his breath. Further than that he said nothing, but kept on with his work. When all was done, barely half of what had been brought remained — so generous had he been.

"My *cens et rente* will not amount to a fifth part of what it should be," said he, surveying the heap somewhat ruefully. "Were it not that I must have food on which to live, I would not have exacted anything."

"You are generous and kind, monseigneur," said the old curé. "I would that all who are in authority in New France were like you. This will be a winter of suffering."

After supper in the château the baron and his party reentered the *calèches* and set out for Quebec. The sun was just setting, but the long twilight of the north held until they neared the city.

"It has been a strange and interesting day," said Randolph to Alfrede, as they entered the valley of the St. Charles. "The barony has a charming flavor of Arcadia.

Except for the stories we heard and the scarcity of men, there was little to suggest that your nation and mine and most of Europe as well are engaged in the bloodiest war of the century. Peaceful barony! May it always remain outside the current of the conflict, and may all the husbands and sons who are away return in safety to their wives and mothers!"

Man has not the gift of prophecy. Little did he suppose that when another year had passed he should be engaged in the bitterest battle of his life upon the soil of that very barony, and that not only his own fate but that of the fair girl who sat beside him should hinge upon the issue.

CHAPTER XXI

AN INTERRUPTION

FOR a week longer all was warmth and summer beauty. Then sharp winds swept down from wintry Labrador, bringing frosts that crimsoned the leaves and sent them fluttering to the earth. Soon the first patch of snow lay gleaming on frowning Mount Tourmente. The sun set in chill autumnal splendor, and the dagger-like spires of fir-trees on the heights of Sillery rose stiff and black against the clear cold amber of the fading sky. One by one the ships for France raised their anchors, and, hoping to escape the swarm of English cruisers that lay in wait in the Gulf and off Newfoundland, dropped down the broad river. Then winter came in earnest: the earth was wrapped in snow; the river lay locked in gleaming fetters; and at intervals the evening sky was illuminated with the gorgeous spectacle of the Northern Lights.

Before navigation closed, most of the troops in the frontiers betook themselves to Montreal and Quebec to winter quarters, leaving small garrisons to guard the fortresses against the hardy rangers of the English king. The capital became livelier than ever. The streets swarmed with figures wrapped in rich furs or in homespun *paletois*, whose vivid colors added a charming tone to the picture as their wearers trudged through the snow-drifts. *La haute noblesse*, the officers, the high civil officials, and the rich bourgeois sped jingling in swift *carrioles* from one manor house to another; here there was a dance, there a

dinner, everywhere gayety, for even in a season of war when famine menaces the Frenchman loses not his light-heartedness.

"Such gayety and frivolity in such a time is incomprehensible to an Englishman," said Randolph one day to the Baron La Vallière. "Two days ago I attended a dinner at the palace of the intendant. There was great display, an elaborate profusion of viands, and after that *lansquenet*. The intendant lost eighty thousand livres."

"*N'importe*," said the baron, shrugging his shoulders, "he will make it back from the people and his king."

"Everywhere I go it is the same story," continued Randolph. "No one talks of anything but gambling, of louis lost, of louis gained. Sometimes it is *lansquenet*, sometimes *trente et quarante*, sometimes *momons*, as you call the dice game; but always it is for money. Yet on my way home last night no less than six men stopped me and said that their families were starving."

The baron's eyebrows contracted fiercely. "Monsieur, you are right. By Ste. Anne! it is deplorable! Sometimes I fear it is the feast of Belshazzar for Nouvelle-France. Bigot and La Grande Société are all powerful. As the Marquis de Montcalm has well said, rogues grow rich and honest men are ruined. Even the goods intended for the Indians are stolen. *Eh bien*, the king pays for all! The shop which you hear called La Friponne — The Cheat — is only one means whereby Bigot robs the people, but it will suffice as an example. He fixed the price of grain by edict, imposed a heavy penalty on all who refused to sell, and sent his agents through the country gathering wheat and maize. When the famine came, the people must go to La Friponne and buy back their grain at a great price.

"His palace is the rendezvous of the *monde élégant et*

frivole of the capital, and to his château, called the Maison de Montagne, beside the high hill of Charlesbourg, resort his companions for many a debauch and revel. Gilded vice stalks in the palace, while gaunt famine preys upon the vitals of the people. All of us know, many of us regret, but, *mon Dieu*, we are powerless! It is the same in France. We have Bigot; France has La Pompadour. The two are in league with one another. The Frenchman is long suffering, monsieur. In that he is not like you Englishmen. Even we of the *noblesse* can do nothing but despise our despoilers. Deschenaux, Bigot's *fidus Achates*, is the son of a cobbler in Picardy. Some say that he fled to New France to escape punishment for forgery. Cadet, the commissary, is the son of a butcher; yet by his peculation he has made himself richer even than Bigot. Major Péan, who has made four million francs, is a coward; but his wife is beautiful — and Péan is complacent. Many of the others are of low birth, yet they have us in a vise. *Voilà tout!*"

"Has no attempt been made to overthrow their power?"

"Baron de Longueval, a brave man, defied them. He swore he would go to Paris and lay the wretched condition of the country before the king. Before his ship sailed he was drawn into a duel, and fell, struck, some say, from behind. Such is likely to be the fate of all who oppose La Grande Société!"

That night Randolph attended a grand supper given by the governor-general. He found the old Château de St. Louis, originally built by Samuel de Champlain, the Father of New France, and reconstructed by the great Comte de Frontenac, her Preserver, brilliantly lighted for the event. The great hall was adorned with gorgeous escutcheons of the royal arms, over which were draped milk-white flags embroidered with the golden lilies. Upon the paneled walls hung the portraits of warriors in plumed

helmets and glittering armor, of governors, intendants, and ministers of state in courtly garb, of ecclesiastics in priestly vestments — portraits which called up the romantic vision of a primeval continent conquered for civilization. All the notabilities of Quebec were there: Montcalm and the higher military officers; the chief civil officials, including the intendant and his accomplices; the great seigneurs, with their families. The hall was thronged with officers in uniform, with gentlemen in their smartest toilets of perukes, velvet coats, embroidered waistcoats, knee breeches and silk stockings; with grand dames and gay demoiselles gowned according to the lastest Parisian intelligence, with powdered hair, court plaster, ribbons, and fans. The table was laid with a hundred covers. There was as much magnificence, as much profusion, as if the *habitants* were not dying of hunger.

The seating had been prearranged, and Randolph noticed with disapproval that Alfrede had been placed next to Reparti. He was surprised to find himself beside Madame Péan. This was not their first meeting; and, little as he respected her morals, he had found her interesting. She was well born, hardly more than a girl, tall, magnificently formed, with beautiful skin, and eyes dark, fascinating, and capable of expressing every emotion in the range of human feeling. "A woman wickedly beautiful," was the way he had described her to Van Braam.

"You did not accept my invitation to the Rue du Parloir last evening, Captain Randolph," she said reproachfully, sweeping him with her great eyes. "Eh bien, the salon was well filled without you. *Sans doute* you were celebrating."

"Celebrating what, madame?" asked Randolph, mystified.

"The fall of Fort Duquesne."

"You are not jesting, madame?"

"Jesting! 'T is not a jesting matter. The news arrived some days ago, but is not yet made public."

"Thank God!" he cried. "Have you the details?"

"The story is short, as all unpleasant stories should be," she said, with a shrug of her white shoulders. "When your army drew near, Captain de Ligneris, being deserted by many of his Indians, blew up his magazine and escaped. But why are you so much interested in the fate of a back-woods fort, monsieur le capitaine?"

"It means safety for our frontier settlers, madame."

"*Les gros sauvages*, lean and brown, who wear the outlandish caps of fur and fringed garments of deerskin?" she said indifferently. "But they are uninteresting. Surely Virginians are not all like them. There must be other gentlemen like you, monsieur — handsome and with the *bel air*."

She said the last with such a playful languishing air that, despite himself, Randolph's pulse beat faster.

"There is cultured society in Virginia, if that is what you mean. It is a pleasant land, and there is much wealth and luxury."

"Ah, luxury?" she cried. "Then it would please me. I was made for luxury. To laugh, to sing, to dance, to enjoy as one will — that is life! But observe the glances the governor is casting at the Marquis de Montcalm. *Ma foi*, no love is wasted there, monsieur! The governor is a jealous man. I believe he suffered more from Carillon than if it had been a French defeat. But there are others who are jealous for other causes, so I must needs be careful."

"To whom do you refer now?" he asked, pretending not to understand.

She laughed teasingly.

"Yonder are Mademoiselle de Saint-Pierre and Captain

Reparti?" she said, avoiding a direct answer. "Is it true that she is to wed the captain?"

"Why do you ask me, madame?"

"Enough!" she cried. "I see that you are no impartial witness. But why should you be troubled? You should adopt the French philosophy and love her who is with you, for be sure that she who is absent is false. Virginia, I am told, is further south even than Provence. There should be warm blood there."

"Assuredly such philosophy would be easy if one's partner were always as beautiful as she is at present," he retaliated, determined to play the game.

"*Fameux!* you progress! You will not need many lessons. Already I begin to fear you!"

She said this gayly, and with a glance that would have carried most men off their feet.

During the rest of the supper they fenced thus. Madame was undeniably charming and possessed a wit that was infectious. The audacity of some of her *double ententes* almost took Randolph's breath away. These he pretended not to understand; but she was clever enough to perceive that he did and rallied him for bashfulness. Randolph felt astonished at his own fertility of resource. Their little duel attracted much attention. Alfrede at first looked surprised, then plunged into conversation with the delighted Reparti. From his seat next Vaudreuil, the usually complacent intendant more than once glanced at the handsome young Virginian with manifest uneasiness.

When the company rose, before the dancing and inevitable card playing began, Randolph joined a group that included Vaudreuil, Montcalm, and Bigot. The talk was of military matters; and the morose-appearing governor, in a manner egotistical to the last degree, was discussing Montcalm's campaigns and uttering much half-veiled criticism.

"If," said he, "our army had followed up its success at Fort William Henry by an attack on Fort Edward, Albany could have been captured, my plans would have been carried out, and the English would have been cowed."

Montcalm, whose temper was as warm as the sky of his own Provence, flashed up at this carping. "*Mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed, "there is no use in repeating chimeras. I have explained twenty times already that the Indians would not follow me. Your own orders were to send the Canadians home so that they might gather the harvest. Fort Edward stands remote from Lake St. Sacrament. I had no means of transporting my artillery. When I go to war, I do the best I can according to my feeble ability. When one is not content with one's lieutenant, he should take command in person and execute his own ideas."

This plain speech, the culmination of a long-smouldering hostility between the two men, produced a sensation. The officers from France uttered little murmurs of applause, but many of the Canadians frowned. The jaunty Bigot toyed with the frills of old lace about his wrists and smiled the cynical smile of one who enjoys a conflict. Vaudreuil's face grew black, and he muttered between set teeth:

"Perhaps next year I shall."

"Then," said Montcalm suavely, "I shall be delighted to serve under you."

With all his egotism, Vaudreuil lacked courage. For the moment he was silenced. But his wife, a pompous over-dressed lady, who was as provincial as himself, cried:

"If the Marquis de Vaudreuil does take command, we shall see what a real general can do!"

"That is quite possible," said Montcalm in a low voice; "but, madame, saving due respect, I have the honour to tell you that ladies ought not to talk war."

"*Mon Dieu!* they are quite capable of talking it to such as you!" she hissed.

"Madame," he repeated icily, "saving due respect, permit me to say, that if Madame de Montcalm were here and heard me talking war with the Marquis de Vaudreuil, she would hold her peace."

This silenced madame, but her husband had by this time recovered his aplomb and was unwilling to quit the argument.

"Here is Captain Randolph, an Englishman," he said. "We will leave it to him if an advance on Fort Edward would not have resulted in the fall of that fortress."

All eyes were turned on the young Virginian. As he cast about for a reply, he remembered that he admired Montcalm as a gallant chivalrous enemy, while he hated the governor as the instigator of the awful horrors on the western frontier. As a result, his answer was marked with candor rather than discretion.

"Messieurs," he said, "I am not competent to speak from a personal knowledge of the campaign of 1757 about Lake George. At that time I was engaged on our western border trying to drive back the hordes of savages whom Your Excellency"—looking at Vaudreuil—"had seen fit to set upon our unprotected settlers. But since the military merit of the Marquis de Montcalm seems called in question, this I will say, namely, that were the Most Christian King to recall him to France, a great sigh of relief would go up from every soldier in the English colonies."

Vaudreuil scowled fiercely, and the cynical smile on Bigot's face for a fleeting instant gave place to one of hate.

"Do you consider the opinions of British soldiers of much value?" the governor sneered, forgetting that it was his own question that had brought Randolph's reply.

"You should not forget," Randolph retorted quietly,

"that there were British soldiers at Crécy, Poitiers, and Agincourt, at Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde, Malplaquet, and Dettingen."

"Ha! ha!" exclaimed Bigot sarcastically, "he will next be telling us that British troops will soon be before Quebec."

"That is not so impossible as you seem to think," said Randolph, growing more and more nettled. "Now that Louisburg is ours, what, in the name of God, is to prevent it?"

"Aye," said Montcalm under his breath, "what is there?"

"Methinks the recent news from the Ohio is somewhat ominous," continued Randolph. "I have heard some here say that Fort Duquesne would never be taken; but, by your own report, the Gateway to the West is ours."

The shot struck home. It was all the more effective because only a few of those present knew the secret. Vaudreuil was at a loss for a reply, but Bigot shrugged his shoulders and sneered.

"Brave words, brave words, for a prisoner! One would think you from our own Gascony and not from Virginia."

"Perhaps," said Randolph; "but if next summer I am still in Quebec, I shall be dodging bombs fired by my own countrymen. Englishmen, Monsieur l'Intendant, do not stop until they are victors. When their enemies are ready to cry quits, they have just begun to fight. But if all among you" — looking at Vaudreuil — "prove as able soldiers as the Marquis de Montcalm, and all among you" — looking at Bigot — "prove as pure patriots as he, then the golden lilies over the citadel will never be replaced by the dragon of St. George."

"Superb! superb!" cried Bigot ironically, clapping his white hands. "But summer is far in the future, and many things may befall ere it comes, as monsieur le capitaine will perhaps learn."

There seemed to be a hidden significance behind his words that Randolph did not understand; but before he could reply the music struck up, dancing began, and a servant came to announce that the tables were ready for *pharaon*. Willingly enough, the group at once broke up, some to dance, some to play, and some to look on.

Randolph danced several numbers with Toinette and other demoiselles of his acquaintance and was just going in search of Alfrede when Madame Péan laid a detaining hand on his arm.

"You bearded the lions magnificently, monsieur le capitaine," she said laughing. "You now have two deadly enemies, the governor and the intendant — but, *ciel!* a mere bagatelle to a bold man. I *adore* bold men when they are handsome, monsieur."

As she said the last she gave his arm a playful pinch and glanced daringly at him through half-closed lids.

"Come with me," she continued, still holding his arm. "I want you to tell me more about your fascinating Virginia. Here, monsieur, this room is just what we are seeking. See, there are no people, and none are likely to come. Let us sit on this divan. Now let me hear all about the ladies of Virginia, how they amuse themselves, how they are courted, how they marry, and how they deceive their husbands."

Wondering vaguely at her interest, Randolph launched into a description of Virginian society and social customs.

"It is all interesting — intensely charming, the life you lead," she said presently, drawing closer and looking straight into his eyes. "But are the ladies of Virginia as beautiful as those of Quebec?"

The personal compliment trembled on his tongue. The temptation was great. In all his life he had never seen a more perfect face and figure. Her skin was as soft and delicate as a child's; her rosy half-open lips showed small

and beautifully even teeth. The neck that supported the imperious head was as shapely as was ever graven by a sculptor, and round it ran a string of glittering diamonds that fell rippling upon a bosom white as the snow on topmost Mount Tourmente. Withal she looked more like a schoolgirl fresh from her first communion than an intendant's mistress — save that out of the lustrous eyes beneath the arched brows shone a hint of the *diablerie* that had made her what she was.

"Those of both countries are superlatively fair," he said cautiously, not daring to look into her face.

"Oh!" she cried petulantly, uttering a little sigh and drawing so close that her breath fanned his cheek and her warm hands fell as if by accident upon his, "you Englishmen are so cold! But I — I am not cold, monsieur! No one is near, why do you fear?"

There was a sound of footsteps outside the door, and a man coughed. Before Randolph realized what she was about, madame had her arms about his neck and was kissing him madly upon the mouth. For a moment everything swam before his sight. Then he recovered himself and pushed her from him.

As he did so, he heard a girl's voice utter a little cry. He looked up, and saw in the doorway Alfrede de Saint-Pierre and Monsieur Deschenaux, a heavy man with a vast wart on his nose.

CHAPTER XXII

A BLOW FALLS

BEFORE breakfast next morning Randolph and Van Braam heard Madame Mercier parleying with some one outside the front door.

"Certainly there must be some mistake," they heard her say.

"There is no mistake, madame," a man's voice made answer. "I command you to open in the King's name!"

Running to a window, Randolph and Van Braam saw in the street outside a file of white-coated grenadiers. A moment later their door was thrown open, and a lieutenant and two soldiers strode into their apartment. Behind the intruders appeared the frightened faces of madame and Louise.

"What means this intrusion?" demanded Randolph of the lieutenant.

"You are Captain Randolph, are you not?" asked the officer, by way of reply.

"Yes," returned Randolph stiffly, "I am."

"*Eh, bien,* I have an order from the governor-general for your arrest. You are my prisoner. Make ready to accompany me."

"For what reason? What is the charge?" gasped Randolph, in astonishment.

"On the charge of plotting to burn Quebec. One of your minions has been caught and has confessed, monsieur. He had with him directions in your own handwriting."



" ' You are Captain Randolph, are you not?' asked
the officer."

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"What minion? What directions? What are you talking about?"

"Ha! ha! but monsieur is the very master of dissimulation! However, I fear it will not avail him before the court-martial. We have documentary proof, and I doubt not his judges will be less merciful than they were with Major Stobo when he made plans of Fort Duquesne. The time has come when an example must be made."

"Captain Van Braam, have you any idea what this means?" asked Randolph, turning to his friend.

"Mine Cott!" replied the Dutchman, "it vas as much to me a mystery as it vas to you. Dere must some mistake pe, or else it vas a drick."

"Come! come!" exclaimed the lieutenant impatiently. "What is the use of all this talk? My order also specifies that I should search your room. Jacques! Pierre! Look through his wardrobe, while I examine this *escritoire*."

"You are welcome to all the discoveries you can make," Randolph said confidently, and then awaited the result with indifference.

The lieutenant rummaged among the papers, and presently held one up in triumph.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he cried sarcastically. "If I had been in your shoes, Captain Randolph, with life the forfeit of discovery, I would have been more careful. See, here I have found your map of the city, with the buildings indicated that were to be fired. The handwriting is the same as these letters signed by you. I shall keep all as evidence."

Randolph sprang to the lieutenant's side, and saw that the officer did indeed have the paper he described. Here and there upon it were written in a hand very like his own such inscriptions as: "Jean is to fire the Château and the Bishop's Residence;" "I have bribed a soldier to blow up the Magazine. With Quebec destroyed, New France

will fall an easy Prey this Year. Will Knighthood be too great a Reward to expect for such a Service?" For a moment the Virginian was too much astonished for utterance; the walls of the room and everything within them seemed whirling round him.

"You do have such a map," he admitted weakly; "but I did not make it."

"Tut! tut!" sneered the lieutenant, "the case is as plain as the nose on Jacques's face, and assuredly that is plain enough. What is the use of denial? Where is your honor as a soldier, monsieur? Does your parole count for nothing?"

"You will live to regret those words," said Randolph.

"I fear not," mocked the Frenchman. "Why, even your friend here believes you guilty."

Randolph turned to Van Braam, and saw that, in truth, there was on the Dutchman's honest face a look of suspicion he was unable to conceal.

"Did you forget yourself, Charles?" Van Braam asked miserably.

"I did not!" cried the Virginian. "I swear to you by the God in Heaven that I had never before set eyes on that paper or the one he says was captured! Do you think me a fool as well as a knave?"

"I believe you," said Van Braam, in a tone that showed vast relief; "and you will forgive. I doubt perhaps you might have to dempday yielded as did Stobo. Put it was a blot of your enemies, tank Cott!"

"*Parbleu!*" the lieutenant exclaimed, "he will have the devil of a time convincing the court-martial of that. But, enough of talk. I will trouble you for your sword, monsieur."

For a moment, rendered thoroughly desperate, Randolph wildly considered selling his life then and there. Van

Braam, seeing what was in his mind, sprang forward and seized the hand he had laid on his sword hilt.

"No! no! Charles, not dot!" he cried. "Gif yourself up. Ve vill a vay find to glear you."

Thus advised and being really powerless to do otherwise, Randolph handed over his weapon and announced that he was at the lieutenant's disposal.

"My orders are to allow you no chance of escape," said the lieutenant, after he had taken the sword. "Having once broken your parole, monsieur, you must expect no favors. Jacques! Pierre! Secure him."

The two soldiers tightly pinioned the prisoner's arms behind him. A cloak was then thrown around his shoulders; his hat was put upon his head; and, amid the tears and protests of madame and Louise, he was led from the house and placed in the midst of the grenadiers.

"Good-by, all of you," he called to Van Braam and the two women.

"Adieu," they answered; while Van Braam added: "Dake heart. I vill at vonce inform your friends. All shall pe done dot can pe."

"*En avant, mes enfants,* to the jail!" broke in the lieutenant.

The order was obeyed, and over the crisp snow crunched prisoner and guards. Their way led along the street called Palace Hill, past the Church of the Récollets, across the Place d'Armes, and past the Intendant's Palace, at the rear of which stood the prison. The clear air was intensely cold; few people were abroad to gaze at the procession; but as he neared the palace Randolph saw ahead a bulky fur-wrapped figure which seemed to be awaiting their approach.

"Aho! it is Captain Randolph, is it?" exclaimed a jeering voice. Looking at the man more closely, the prisoner

saw that it was Reparti. "One would infer that monsieur is in trouble."

"Yes, thanks no doubt to you," said Randolph sullenly.
"Monsieur does me too much honor."

Randolph's anger flared up hot and fierce. "Some day, you devil," he cried, "I hope to stand face to face with you. When that day comes, beware!"

"*Hélas!*" exclaimed the Frenchman, with well-simulated regret. "I fear that day will never be. A rope and not my sword will be your instrument of death."

"The noose is not yet tied, and Fortune's wheel sometimes turns quickly. I tell you, you wolf, that some day I shall kill you! I spared you once; I will not do it again!"

"When was that?" asked Reparti, incredulously yet with interest.

"The night after I rescued Mademoiselle de Saint-Pierre from the Iroquois. You passed within twenty yards of where I was standing guard. I had my rifle pointed at your heart. I had only to touch the trigger, and you would have been food for wolves."

"Such an opportunity comes but once, monsieur. You were a fool for letting it pass."

"So I think now. Do you know why I did not kill you? It was because it is an Englishman's nature to fight fair. But another time will come when I can do it honorably. I say again, Beware!"

"Tut! tut!" sneered Reparti. "You talk again as you did last night. *Mon Dieu!* it is to laugh!"

"March on! in God's name, march on!" cried Randolph to the soldiers, who had paused during the *rencontre*. "Why do you keep me here listening to this ruffian's jibes?"

"*Oui, en avant, mes enfants,*" said Reparti. "Take the incendiary away. I know a far more charming person to talk with. I am losing time."

Thus adjured, the guard moved on and entered the gloomy precincts of the prison. After the lieutenant had explained his errand to the jailer, that dignitary called a keeper, who took down a bunch of enormous keys and led the way to a cell. The keeper was a large man, with a coarse cunning look about his eyes, and canine teeth so long and prominent that, though partially concealed by a growth of bushy black beard, they had procured for him among his fellows the name of Dent-de-Loup.

"This is where we put men whom we expect soon to hang," said he, chuckling diabolically as he opened the door. "*Pardieu*, I wish I could put more English devils into it!"

Randolph entered, and his arms were unbound. His captors then made ready to leave him.

"Adieu, monsieur," said the lieutenant. "This apartment is not so luxurious as some in the intendant's palace, but you should be grateful that you are here and not in the dungeon of the citadel."

The heavy door clanged shut, and Randolph found himself at liberty to examine his abode. The cell was, indeed, far from luxurious. It was just large enough to contain a narrow cot, a rude chair, a small table, a stove, and a heap of pine wood. A dim light entered from a little window, across which stout iron bars were securely fixed. The walls were of stone. To force one's way out of such a place would be manifestly impossible; but, as if to make assurance doubly sure, a sentinel paced back and forth in the courtyard without, and the sound of measured footfalls informed the prisoner that a guard patrolled the corridor within.

After ascertaining all these things and thinking long upon his situation, Randolph lay down upon the little cot. For the first time since the war began, he gave way to despair.

For two days he saw no one save the sentinels without and the keeper who brought his meager meals. Those were melancholy days, and oft the prisoner wondered if he still had friends and if they were working for him. Had Van Braam, too, been imprisoned? Did Montcalm believe him guilty? And Alfred? Would it, in truth, be his fate to be hanged, exposed to the scorn of his country's enemies, perhaps despised by his dearest friends?

It was not the first time he had faced death. A score of times since that fateful journey to the Ohio he had stood in that grim presence, but never before had death appeared in so frightful a form. To fall with honor on some ensanguined field was a fate little to be feared. But to die upon the scaffold? Ah, that was another thing! More than once in his bitter reflections he found it in his heart to wish that the bullet he had received at Ticonderoga had gone a little lower.

But in the end his healthy spirits won the day. He was not the man to surrender without a struggle. His was a masterly spirit; the determination to conquer, a life-long habit. Young as he was, this habit had developed a strength of will that no crisis or danger, however great, could long intimidate. Though he knew that the foes who had plotted his downfall would stop at nothing to insure his destruction, he would not sink without a struggle. He remembered the cruelties of which those enemies had been guilty. Again in fancy he stood amid the smouldering ruins of the stockade on the Opequon and saw the black vultures, ghoul-like, rise heavily from nameless horrors. Again he climbed the laurel-covered mountain side and gazed down with twitching fingers at the mutilated body of the murdered woman. Before his eyes rose the handsome eager face of a roguish child gathering violets in a brush-encumbered clearing. Where was that little lad?

No! no! the monsters guilty of those deeds must not triumph! By God Eternal, they should not triumph! All that he had planned and promised should yet come to pass. Somewhere, somehow, he would even rescue the little boy and restore him to his parents' arms. Alfrede should yet believe in him. Ah, Alfrede! What must she think of the scene between him and Madame Péan? Why had he not declared himself before? "T was that I wished to take no chance of losing by speaking too quickly," he excused himself.

On the morning of the third day he heard voices in the corridor. Presently his door opened, disclosing first the malevolent face of Dent-de-Loup and then the honest countenance of Van Braam.

"Mine Cott, mine frient, I had vone hard dime gedding de brivilege of seeing you!" the Dutchman exclaimed, shaking Randolph's hand. "I pesieged de governor-general. 'No,' said he, 'you may not see de rascal!' I appealed to the Marquis de Montcalm. At first he teclare he could do noddings, for Vaudreuil is his superior; put at last he consented to speak to de governor, and de orter vas obtained."

"What news have you?" asked Randolph eagerly.

"None goot," said the Dutchman soberly. "Py heaven, mine frient, you vas in a dight blace! De broof against you seems comblete. Most pelieve you guilty. Even Montcalm he vas at first afraid you vas py batriotism avay carried. I say to him: 'Captain Rantolph is de soul of honor. Pesides he vas no fool! You know he has enemies.' Den he nod his head, look bleased, and visper dot it vas all a blot, dot he believe in your honor. As for de beople, dey cry, 'Down vid de incendiary!' Dey dalks apout your speech at de tinner and nod deir heads. 'De English may come,' say dey; 'put *he* vill not see dem!'"

"'T is just as I feared," said Randolph. Then he asked in the manner of one who dreads the answer: "What does Mademoiselle de Saint-Pierre think?"

"Mine Cott!" cried the Dutchman, "dere vas de greatest buzzle of all. She say, 'I vill swear he is innocent;' put ven I ask, 'Haf you no message?' she say, 'No!' short like dot. 'I vant nefer him to see again. Let him get his comfort from Madame Péan!' I know not vat ofer her haf come."

A thought that was wondrous comforting flashed into Randolph's mind. Next he began to laugh. His friend viewed this change with such evident alarm that he laughed the louder.

"Vat in de world vas de matter vid you now?" Van Braam demanded.

"I begin to see everything, and it is ludicrous. You will think me stupid for not having guessed it before," said Randolph. Then he told the astonished Van Braam of his experience with Madame Péan and of the inopportune arrival on the scene of Monsieur Deschenaux and Alfrede. "And all this time I have supposed that madame had taken a passing fancy to me, and that Alfrede's appearance was an accident!"

"Monsieur Deschenaux has he not a great vart on his nose?" demanded Van Braam eagerly.

"You have guessed it. He is the villain who set those three rascals on to murder us. Furthermore he is said to have fled from France years ago to escape punishment for forgery. 'T was doubtless he who forged the papers. Oh, they are clever rascals!"

"Dey dry steal your honor and your lady lofe at vonce," cried Van Braam. "Mine Cott!"

"The question now is," said Randolph, after a little pause, "how are we to circumvent their designs? My neck does not feel as though it were made for a halter."

"And pesides you not vant to lose Mademoiselle Alfrede, no?" laughed Van Braam, whose spirits were beginning to rise now that the source of danger was known. "Eh, vell, '*Alle begin is mocielijk*; Efery beginning is difficult,' says a broverb in poth our languages. Put pefore ve make an effort to start, bermit me one question to ask you."

"As many as you like," said Randolph.

"If you vere de aldernatif offered to pe hung or to lose mademoiselle, vich, mine friend, vould you dake?"

Randolph reddened, and Van Braam laughed.

"I'd take the hanging," stammered the prisoner at last.

"I dought so, put I vas not quite sure. I wanted to pe pefore I vent farther. Since it vas as it vas, de first ding to pe underdaken is to safe for you mademoiselle. Afder dot ve can see apout de hanging maype."

"How are you going to set about it?" asked Randolph, with poorly concealed eagerness.

"Dot I must haf dime to dink out. Mine Cott! mine goot frient, do you pelief dot I carry an assortment of blans for reconciling distressed lofers around in mine head so dot I haf put to select de vone for de emergency fit?"

Randolph admitted that to expect so much would be somewhat unreasonable.

"Eh, vell, I vill go now," said Van Braam, rising from the chair in which he had been sitting and rapping on the door in order to attract the attention of Dent-de-Loup, who had retired to the corridor. "Since you vas not able to addend to dem, I vill dake all your affairs in mine hands and do as I see fit. Dink ofer your sins, for your enemies are bowerful and may driumph yet. You may pe sure dey vill stop at noddings dot dey tare dry. Put pefore I go you must bromise me dot in a certain case you vill not pe pashful. You vas pashful too long already yet. Vill you bromise?"

"What do you mean?" asked Randolph, puzzled.

"Dot I vill not dell you, for I vish not to arouse false hopes," answered Van Braam decisively. "You vill de dime recognize if it comes. Vill you bromise?"

"I promise," agreed Randolph.

"Farevell den, and may Cott pe vid us!" said the Dutchman.

After a hearty handshake he was gone. The door clanged shut after him. The rusty bolt slid into place. Again the prisoner was left to his solitary reflections.

CHAPTER XXIII

ALFREDE

AFTER leaving the prison Van Braam hurried along the snowy streets to the La Vallière mansion. He found Toinette and Alfrede sitting near a sunny window, busy, according to the custom of the country, with their needlework. Both sprang up and hurried to greet him. There was an anxious question in Alfrede's eyes, but Toinette was the first to speak.

"What news have you from Captain Randolph?" she cried. "I am glad the poor man has one good friend, even though Alfrede has deserted him. Englishman as he is, I do not believe him guilty."

"I am rejoiced that he has so fair and able an advocate," said Van Braam in French. "He is in need of friends, though I believe we have discovered who is back of the plot to ruin him."

"Tell us quickly," Toinette demanded.

"Give me time, give me time," he protested in the same language, which he spoke better than English. "It is something of a story, and I am out of breath. You will recall, mademoiselles, that the first evening our friend was in Quebec he and I were attacked by three ruffians, set on, so one confessed, by a heavy man with a wart on his face. We think this man is a person who came to New France to escape punishment for forgery. 'T was doubtless he who forged the papers, and he also engaged in another plot the evening of the dinner."

"Is this man Monsieur Deschenaux?" cried Alfrede eagerly.

"The same," said Van Braam, still in French. Then he added in English: "He blayed a bart vid Madame Péan. Now do you understand somedings?"

"Oh!" said Alfrede in a tone that meant many things.

"What are you two talking about?" Toinette demanded petulantly.

"I was saying that Monsieur Deschenaux is a friend of Madame Péan's," said Van Braam blandly.

"Was that all?" said Toinette. "I do not believe it was. Alfrede, what has come over you? You suddenly look more cheerful than you have since the evening of the dinner, when you came home so disconsolate. One would think those English sentences conveyed some tender message from Captain Randolph."

"Perhaps they did, *ma chérie*," said Alfrede archly, giving her friend a little squeeze.

"*Eh, bien*, I see that I must learn English," Toinette said resignedly.

"Is Captain Randolph in good spirits?" asked Alfrede shyly, ignoring Toinette's remark.

"Good for a man in his position, but I think he would like to have some of his friends visit him."

"I 'll have papa take me!" Toinette cried. "I know we can get permission. I danced with the governor the other evening, and I'm sure he will not refuse me anything. Of course Alfrede will not care to go."

"I 'll go if I may," said Alfrede, vainly endeavoring to keep back the telltale flush.

"What! did I hear aright? *Mon Dieu!* I thought you wished never to see him again. Only this morning you said so. What has happened to change you? But, of course, you can go. If we were to go without you, the

prisoner would be disappointed; and, besides, Lieuten—I mean my admirers might be jealous."

Presently Van Braam rose to go. Both girls accompanied him to the door. Just before he departed he turned to Alfrede and said: "A little while ago I said something in English that only you understood; now I wish to honor Mademoiselle Toinette with a confidence."

"Certainly," said Alfrede, and withdrew.

The Dutchman sagely whispered something into Toinette's pretty pink ear, whereat she smiled and nodded knowingly.

With that he departed.

Toinette at once sought her father. When she found him, she announced her purpose of visiting the prisoner. The old baron made no objection, for she was an only child and since her mother's death he rarely opposed her in anything. Besides, though an ardently patriotic Frenchman, he liked Randolph and was one of the few who doubted his guilt. Accordingly, Toinette hurried off a messenger to Vaudreuil with a note asking in phrases full of pretty compliments the desired permission. As the event proved, her boast of influence had been no idle one; by mid-afternoon she was in possession of the coveted order.

Behold them, then, setting out for the prison. The baron was dressed in full regalia, with his three-cornered hat on his head and his bejeweled sword at his side, but was withal so bundled up in furs that little of his rich clothing and only the tip of his beak-like nose were visible. The girls, also, had attired themselves in a manner fitting to do honor to the prisoner; but they, too, were so hidden by heavy wraps that onlookers caught only fleeting glimpses of dainty furbelows and other products of the modiste's art. Recognized by but few, the party reached the prison. Passing the sentinels who paced without, they entered,

and the baron showed the governor's order to the jailer. That official was at once all obsequiousness. After delivering himself of several high-flown compliments to the ladies and expressing his envy of a captive so happy as to have such nymphs call on him, he ordered Dent-de-Loup to conduct the party to Randolph's cell.

Meanwhile the prisoner had been thinking over for the thousandth time the long train of events that had connected him with Alfrede. He had again lived through the exciting moments of her rescue from the Iroquois and the sweet pleasures of the journey to Presqu'isle, and had reached the moment of parting, when a key grated in the lock, and his door swung open. Springing to his feet, he perceived first the repulsive features of the keeper, next the friendly countenance of the baron, then the piquant face of Mademoiselle Toinette, and finally the blushing, lovely, anxious face of Alfrede. Suddenly his dark cell seemed transformed into a place of light and cheer and happiness.

"*Mon Dieu!*" the baron cried, when the greetings were over, "we are sorely grieved to find you in such an unhappy condition. I know, monsieur," he continued, lowering his voice to a whisper, "who is back of this. *C'est La Grande Société*, of which I told you. But do not despair. We will find a way to free you."

"May heaven reward you for your coming and for your kind words," said Randolph, with deep feeling. "'T is worth imprisonment to know that one has friends who will not desert him, even when his guilt seems clear."

The baron now pressed the prisoner for the details of his arrest and also inquired concerning his suspicions. Randolph answered as best he could; but before the old nobleman's curiosity was fully satisfied Toinette plucked him by the sleeve and said: "Papa, let us ask the jailer

to be kind and considerate to our poor friend. Let us go at once, else perhaps he may be leaving the prison on some duty. Alfrede can stay and keep Captain Randolph company."

All unsuspecting and nothing loth to undertake the only thing that seemed to furnish any immediate prospect for doing the prisoner a service, the baron limped obediently after his daughter; and thus, as Van Braam had planned, Alfrede and Randolph were left alone together. Mentally blessing Toinette, Randolph did not forget the Dutchman's parting injunction and his own promise.

"It does me more good than I can tell to have you come," he said gently, looking ardently into her eyes.

"Oh," she cried, "I fear you are in such danger! This gloomy prison, this comfortless cell, make me have dark forebodings. Yet I am so helpless. When I was a prisoner, you came and rescued me. But what can I, a poor weak girl, do for you?"

He stepped closer but could not speak. A warm flush suffused her face. Her breath came quickly. And in the dark eyes she lifted momentarily to his was a look there could be no mistaking.

"Alfrede!" he whispered joyously. "Alfrede!" And he took her in his arms. She hid her face in his coat but did not try to free herself.

"You are my Lily of France and not a poor weak girl," he said. "Have you forgotten the warning you gave us at the little fort in the wilderness from which next day you waved us *bon voyage*? The happiest moment of my life was when, by heavenly chance, I saved you from the savages and paid the debt. Do you think my heart was light when we said good-by? Sleeping or waking, on the march or beside the wintry campfire, victor or wretched prisoner, my thoughts have ever been of the fair sweet

girl of Fort Le Boeuf. My dearest dream of happiness has been of some transcendent day when, peace come again, I might sail with her up the broad and silvery Potomac to my home upon its bank. Alfrede, my heart has long been yours; it will always be yours."

Gently he raised her head until presently she lifted her glorious eyes wet with tears tremulously to his. Her arms tightened about his neck, and their lips met in a kiss that was sweeter even than those of which he had so long dreamed.

"I have loved mine enemy," she whispered, smiling through her tears. "May God preserve him for me!"

CHAPTER XXIV

A SWORD IS SHARPENED

DUSK was falling when a door of the Château de St. Louis opened, giving exit to a file of soldiers with Randolph in their midst.

“A bas l’incendaire! Death to the Bostonnais!” cried a venomous mob gathered in the street.

A stocky man in the uniform of a captain of the old Virginia regiment pushed his way determinedly forward. “Vat is it, Charles, in de name of Cott!” he cried hoarsely.

“Death, as I expected,” answered Randolph, his face pale but calm, and his shoulders squared. “I am to be hanged at two on Friday.”

By his tone and gestures the crowd caught the meaning of the words and raised a joyous shout.

“Silence, *canaille!*” the Dutchman hissed fiercely, and half drew his sword. Those nearest fell back, and Van Braam stepped closer to the prisoner.

“There was no real trial,” Randolph continued. “The court was packed with Bigot’s and the governor’s creatures. I was not allowed to testify. ‘Tis all a mere cloak for murdering me. Doubtless even the time of trial was thus chosen because Montcalm is at Montreal and cannot interfere.”

“Mine Cott!” Van Braam cried, his face ashen with horror. “It cannot pe! It must not pe! Some vay must pe found to safe you!”

"I fear there is no way," said Randolph composedly. "Good-by, old friend, my race is run. Come to see me if you can and carry my love and thanks to my friends. And should the Cross of St. George ever fly yonder" — he pointed to the citadel — "let Englishmen know of this. I flung it in the teeth of Vaudreuil and his minions that the great British nation never allows one of its citizens to be done to death without exacting vengeance!"

"Move on!" savagely commanded the sergeant in charge of the guard, and he struck Randolph a blow with the butt of his fusil.

"For shame, to treat a prisoner so!" cried Van Braam in French.

"Do not heed them; you can do no good," Randolph said hurriedly, fearing lest his friend might also get into trouble.

Van Braam swore some deep Dutch oaths and watched the prisoner marched off between the soldiers. Then he hurried through the gathering darkness to the La Vallière home with his gloomy news. It was a sad task for the old soldier, but it was a duty that had to be performed. Sorrowfully he plodded through the snow, and presently stood before her who waited. A sentence told all; and, as he stumbled back to his lodgings, he still saw a pitifully drawn face and heard a cry of anguish. Aye, and for years afterwards they came to him in his dreams.

The trial had taken place on a Tuesday. On Wednesday morning Van Braam went with the old baron to the governor-general's to plead for a pardon, or at least for a reprieve, until the prisoner might collect evidence to prove his innocence. But Vaudreuil was obdurate.

"We were too lenient in the case of Major Stobo," said he, cutting short their plea. "An example must be made. Your friend has forfeited his life and must die."

Next day Alfrede and the baron went on the same mission. "He saved me from the Iroquois," the girl pleaded tearfully. "He risked his life to see me to a place of safety. Oh, monseigneur, grant me what I ask, or it will break my heart."

"T is useless," the governor answered coldly, unmoved either by her beauty or her tears. "The rascal must pay the price. *Mon Dieu!* mademoiselle, methinks it is not seemly in a daughter of France to plead thus for a dis-honored enemy. And you, too, baron, might be engaged in a worthier cause."

The seigneur's temper gave way utterly. In his youth he had borne the reputation of fearing neither man, devil, nor Iroquois, nor had he grown timid with age. For five minutes Pierre François Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil, writhed under a torrent of execrations such as had never been heaped upon his head before. Exhausted at last, the baron turned to the girl and said gently:

"Come, Alfrede, we need not tarry. There are egotism, incompetence, and fraud here, but no justice nor pity! If the Marquis de Montcalm were in Quebec, he would listen to us; but ere he returns the murder will be consummated."

With their last hope gone, they left the palace, and presently were home once more. Alfrede sought her room, but she had not been in it long ere her prayers were disturbed by a servant's announcing that Captain Reparti was below and wished to speak with her.

"Tell him I will not see him," cried the girl bitterly, for his face was the last in the world she wished to look upon.

The servant withdrew, but soon returned. "He insists, mademoiselle," said she. "He says that it has something to do with Captain Randolph."

"Tell him I will come at once," cried the girl, a faint hope rising in her breast.

After drying her tears and arranging her dress she descended the stairs to the drawing-room. The captain was standing near a window. Though he was dressed in a brilliant new uniform, he seemed more hateful to her than ever. He made an exaggerated bow, and surveyed her wolfishly.

"Mademoiselle grows more beautiful every day," he exclaimed. "Never were there such eyes, such a mouth, such a form, such a bearing! The goddess of love herself was but a peasant woman beside her."

"I did not come down to hear compliments," she said coldly. "I was told that you wished to speak with me about Captain Randolph. I hoped that like a gallant Frenchman you had discovered some way whereby his innocence might be proved and his life saved."

"He is not innocent!" Reparti snarled, unable to conceal his hatred. "He broke his parole most dishonorably. I am glad he is to hang."

"He is not guilty!" the girl cried hotly. "He is the soul of honor. You shall not speak thus of him. It is all a wicked plot. He is my good friend, who saved me from the Iroquois."

"*N'importe*," sneered the captain brutally, "he is to hang."

"Is there no way — no way he can be saved?" she asked, her eyes filling with tears.

"There is one way," said he.

"Thank God! And what is that?"

"On one condition, mademoiselle," he said, taking a step nearer, "I will consent to save his life."

"What is that condition, monsieur?" she asked unsteadily, a chill fear gripping her heart as she saw his look. "If it is money that is needed, all my fortune shall be the reward of the man who saves him."

Reparti shrugged his shoulders disdainfully. "Who cares for your fortune without its owner? Give me both, and he shall go free."

"Mother of God!" cried the girl faintly.

"I have much favor with the governor-general," he persisted. "Out of friendship he will grant my request. He dare not refuse it, for I control the Indians of the whole Northwest."

"But I do not love you," she said, temporizing. "Why is it, monsieur, that you have so followed and troubled me? My father — God rest his soul — never encouraged you. From the beginning, gently at first and then more emphatically as you became more persistent, I have repulsed you. I have not concealed the fact that I did not trust you, that I even loathed you. Why have you continued? Why have you persecuted me?"

As she spoke some of the old imperiousness with which in the past she had awed and dominated him returned. But though his eyes fell beneath her indignant glance, he was not to be turned aside.

"I love you, mademoiselle, I love you!" he cried fiercely.

"You do not know the meaning of love. One who really loves is willing to sacrifice! — to renounce. Your love is selfishness — passion only. My love is given to another, and surely you would not wish a wife who did not love you."

"Love will come," he said eagerly. "At least I shall possess you with all your beauty. Listen, mademoiselle; since first I saw you five years ago at Fort Le Boeuf I have been on fire for you. I swore that I would have you, and Hertel Reparti always keeps his oaths. You have scorned me, but I still love you. By the Virgin and all the saints, you shall be mine!"

Carried away by passion, he came toward her; but she drew back in readiness for flight.

"Do you believe," she cried scornfully, "that the prisoner would accept his life on such terms? I know he would rather be burned at the stake by your Ottawas than have me make a tithe of such a sacrifice. Nor will I make it — though I would gladly for his sake. I hate you! I loathe you! I defy you! It was you who plotted his ruin. Go on with your cruel plan, but remember there is a God in heaven who guards the innocent and punishes the guilty!"

"Then the Englishman shall die, though a thousand devils should try to prevent it!" he shrieked in a rage, and dashed toward the door.

"Stay yet a moment!" she called hastily, the dread alternative rising in her brain as he was about to disappear. "Let me consider — what you have said. Perhaps — I spoke too hastily."

The courage that had thus far sustained her gave way. She burst into tears. Mollified, he returned.

"Think better of your answer," he said, somewhat more gently. "I admit that you owe the fellow something. By saving him the debt will be paid. As my wife you will be mistress of one of the largest fortunes in New France. I will be your slave, and Reparti has never been the slave of any woman. You shall have everything you ask. In my arms you will soon forget this passing fancy."

A bitter answer trembled on her tongue, but she finally said: "I must have time to think. Let me have until morning. Then you shall have your answer."

He would have said more in his behalf; but she stopped him, no longer able to endure. Reluctantly he at last took his departure.

When he was gone, she sent for Van Braam and told him of Reparti's offer. The Dutchman burst into a rage when he understood, and swore she must not accept it. But she

would not promise either way, and the good man departed even more downcast than he had come.

Early next morning, making use of an order already obtained, he carried the news to Randolph. "You vas to pe free on vone condition," said he.

"What is that?" demanded Randolph, his face lighting up.

"Alas!" cried Van Braam, much distressed, "I vas go apout it awkward. I vas rouse false hopes. It vas dat Mademoiselle Alfrede pecomes Madame Reparti."

Randolph sprang forward and seized Van Braam fiercely by the shoulder.

"When is her answer to be given?" he demanded fiercely.

"Dis morning."

"Then in God's name go at once and stop it!" cried the prisoner. "I would rather be hung twenty times than let that ruffian have her!"

"So I dell her," said Van Braam.

"Not another word! Go!" shrieked Randolph, fairly forcing him to the door. "By God, man, you must stop it!"

Van Braam never made a quicker trip than he did from the prison to the La Vallière mansion. But at the door he met Reparti leaving, and there was a look of triumph on his dark face. He gave the Dutchman a salutation that was almost friendly.

"Surely you haf not yourself sacrificed?" said Van Braam, when he saw Alfrede. "I haf just come from Captain Randolph. 'Dell her,' cried he, 'dot I vould rather dwenty dimes pe hung dan she should marry him.' "

"It is too late," said Alfrede sadly, her face as white as the kerchief in her hand. "I could not bear the thought of his hanging on the scaffold when a sacrifice on my part would save him. It is all arranged. The wedding is to

be this evening. Captain Reparti has gone to secure a reprieve. When the wedding is over and the Marquis de Montcalm is here to sign the paper, the prisoner is to be pardoned."

"Mine Cott!" said Van Braam.

"This world is not made for happiness," cried the girl bitterly. "It is a place of sin, sorrow, suffering and renunciation. But do not think that I intend to be his wife. I shall wed him and thus save my friend's life, but I will escape him if I can. I will find refuge in a convent and take the veil. One can always do that."

"Dot marriage must nefer pe," cried Van Braam, his scattered wits gradually readjusting themselves. "Some oder vay must yet pe found. Listen, little friend. I lofe Charles like he vas mine son and you like you vas mine taughter. I owe much to him, and now I must some vay find to pay it. Mine Cott, I must! Den years ago I comes to Virginia, old, benniless, and vid a vound not yet healed. I know not vat vould haf pecome of me; put Charles dakes me to his plantation, keeps me, and sets me up as a fencing master, so dot I haf vonce more a blace in de wold. He vas vone who vas alvays good teeds like dot toing. Efery vone lofes him. Mine Cott, I must safe you for him else he can nefer pe happy! He vas not vone to forget. I know vot it vould pe to him to lose you. Old Van Braam knows. He too vas vonce in lofe. She vas a sweet and bretty girl, much like you. Her name it vas Vilhelmina. She lofed me too, mademoiselle; you vould not believe it now; put vid her arms around my neck she said it. Her father vas a vealthy merchant of Amsterdam; I vas a boor soldier. She had another lofer, an old man vid many ships and many great shops. Him vas she forced to marry. In a month she vas mad, and soon she vas tead, poor Vilhelmina! Aye, mademoiselle, and Jacob Van

Braam, merry as he vas somedimes, has alvays dot canker gnawing at his heart. He vas know down to de pitter tregs vot sorrow is. He swear dot if he can brevent, you shall not know it. Until you hear dot Van Braam is tead, do not cease to hope."

Alfrede was weeping with her head on the arm of her chair. Patting her dark locks with a clumsy hand, he tiptoed softly from the room. At the door he paused for a moment and looked back at her. There were tears in his eyes; but the look in his face was one of determination, not of weakness. Ere she knew it, he was gone.

Unknown to either, there had been a listener. Sympathetic Toinette had stood behind a half-opened door and had seen and heard all. By some quick intuition she had half read something that was in the Dutchman's mind. Wicked little eavesdropper and brave little heroine that she was, she was longing with all her soul that she might do something to help, when Lieutenant Lusignan entered.

"Oh," she cried to him, "Alfrede has consented; but I think Captain Van Braam hopes in some way to prevent it. Henri, will you do something for me?"

"Anything in the world, Toinette."

"Then run after Captain Van Braam and help him all you can. Hasten!"

The lieutenant turned and started to obey.

"Wait just a moment," she called when he had reached the door.

"There may be danger," she said, when he had come back to her.

"*N'importe*, I am a soldier. I love you. I will go where you tell me."

A look that he had never seen before but that he had long wished to see came into her eyes. "Henri," she said gently, drawing closer to him, "there is something you

have often begged me for that you may take before you go."

Presently she pushed him away. "No more now, dear, or you will lose him," she protested.

Nevertheless, she gave him a final kiss, then led him to the door and closed it after him. Then she ran into the drawing-room and threw her arms around Alfred.

"Take heart, dearest, take heart!" she cried, kissing her. "I know that Captain Van Braam is going to do some brave grand thing that will save you both! And I have sent my Henri to help him."

Meanwhile Lusignan had sped down the street after Van Braam, with whom he presently came up.

"Mademoiselle Toinette says that I am to go with you," he said.

Van Braam glanced keenly at him from under shaggy brows. A look of intelligence passed between them. "You are a brave man, lieutenant; I shall be glad to have you with me," said the captain in French.

They went first to Van Braam's lodgings. There the captain wrote a long letter, which he addressed and sealed.

"Do you think you could find a messenger who would carry this to the Marquis de Montcalm at Montreal?" he asked the lieutenant. "Here is money to pay. Do not spare expense and insist upon the utmost haste."

The Frenchman took the letter and went out. When he returned half an hour later, he found Van Braam seated near the window engaged in rubbing the edge and point of his sword with a little piece of stone.

"I succeeded," said the lieutenant.

"Good!" said Van Braam. "Sit down. I shall be ready presently."

Carefully, phlegmatically he continued to rub the little

stone back and forth along the shining blade. At last he handed the weapon to the lieutenant, who tested it with his thumb.

"*C'est assez!*" said the officer admiringly. "It would do magnificently for a razor."

CHAPTER XXV

A FRIEND IN NEED

ON the bank of the little river St. Charles, and close beside the prison and La Friponne of evil fame, rose the palace of the intendant, a building larger and in interior decorations more magnificent than the old Château de St. Louis itself. Within was a spacious dining-room containing a rare display of plate and a long table, laid, as was the intendant's custom, with twenty covers, and loaded down with an abundance of rich viands and a still greater abundance of old wines, *eau-de-vie*, and other drinks. Around the table were gathered a score of men of diverse appearance, dress, and station, for knavery makes strange companions. At the head sat Bigot himself, easy, alcrt, complacent, smiling, and elegantly dressed, with a profusion of laces and jewels. On his left hand was Monsieur Cadet, the commissary, likewise richly dressed, but betraying by his manners the lowness of his origin; on his right hand was Captain Reparti, resplendent in his new uniform, with a look of mingled satisfaction, triumph, and anticipation on his dark face. Beyond these two were Monsieur Deschenaux, he of the warty nose, and little Major Hugues Péan, husband by courtesy of the reigning sultana. Still further down were eight or ten officers of French regulars and of the colonial *troupes de la marine*, who were carrying on an animated conversation with some rough swarthy bushrangers in the picturesque costume usually affected by *coureurs-de-bois*.

When the last of his guests had ceased to eat, the intendant rose to his feet, shook out his dainty perfumed kerchief, replaced it, looked reflectively down the table, and then raised a glass of wine in his jeweled hand. Having thus gained the attention of all present, he said with an inscrutable smile:

"My good friends, I have today an interesting announcement to make. It is an announcement that will bring both joy and sadness—joy, because it has to do with the happiness of a friend; sadness, because henceforth, save on occasions the most extraordinary, we shall be deprived of the light of that friend's presence here with us. But why mourn his absence when we can console ourselves with the thought that he is enjoying a bridegroom's felicity? Gentlemen of France, both New and Old, I ask you to drink to the domestic happiness of Captain Hertel Reparti, who is this evening to celebrate his nuptials with that exquisite flower of womanhood, Mademoiselle de Saint-Pierre."

The toast was drunk amid shouts, and then the company drew round the prospective bridegroom to express their felicitations.

"*Ma foi!*" exclaimed Cadet, "so you have won her at last, comrade! *Eh bien*, she is worth waiting for. She is the sweetest bud in all New France, and I would give sixty thousand livres to stand in your shoes if only for a day."

"But what, Hertel, will you do with Saki and your other Naiads of the wilderness?" demanded a young daredevil who wore the dress of a *coureur-de-bois*, though his language showed that he had not always followed that wild life. "Are we to hope that you will bequeath them to us, your less fortunate comrades?"

Reparti beamed beneath the torrent of congratulations and of raillery. "*Parbleu*, I am a happy man!" he cried.

"I have won what all wish to possess. But, Baptiste, though I love my friends, you ask too much. Because a man is wedded to the most adorable of women, is it that he should be deprived of all comfort in the wigwam when he takes the wilderness trail?"

"Bravo!" exclaimed Bigot, clapping his hands approvingly. "Messieurs, our friend is in the most beatific state it is possible for sinful man to attain. He is in love — but not too much. He is a philosopher. He is — but who in the name of the devil have we here?"

As he spoke there was a noise in the hall without; and, preceded by a servant, two newcomers entered the room. One was Lieutenant Lusignan; the other, Captain Van Braam, a stern look of determination on his broad face.

"Aho, 't is the Dutchman!" cried Reparti, in a sneering voice full of triumph. "Doubtless he comes to bear me his congratulations. 'T is considerate; methought he loved the girl himself."

A flush overspread Van Braam's face, but he drew nearer the speaker and said in a strong, clear voice: "I do love her. I love her as though she were my daughter. I have come to tell these gentlemen what a crime it is that you should compel her to marry you when her heart is bestowed elsewhere."

"*Pardieu*, her heart is mine!" the Frenchman cried. "Who told you that?"

"Mademoiselle herself," said Van Braam quietly.

Reparti's face grew livid. "Never go near her again, Dutch pig, or I will kill you!" he roared.

"That is the second time monsieur has called me a pig," said Van Braam coolly, coming still closer. "He must think that I am in fear of him. To prove to him and all here present that he is mistaken, I strike him so!"

Suiting the action to the word, he gave Reparti a hard

blow in the mouth with his closed hand, and then, quickly catching up a glass of wine, flung vessel and all full in the Frenchman's face.

"Thunder of God!" sputtered Reparti, rubbing his eye to clear it of the wine, "you shall die for this!"

Van Braam bowed mockingly. "Will monsieur fight the Dutch boar now?"

"Captain Reparti can do no less after such an insult," said Lusignan, who saw in a flash what his friend was working for. At the same instant he pinched meaningly the arm of a French officer who stood next him.

"Certainly," echoed the officer, "he must fight."

"Yes, let them settle the affair at once, by all means," exclaimed others.

For a moment Bigot was half minded to protest. Knowing how the marriage had been arranged, he saw at a glance that this was Van Braam's countermove. But, exquisite gentleman though he was, Bigot loved to watch the flash of swords; so, having no doubt as to the outcome of a conflict, he merely flicked a spot of dust off his velvet sleeve and kept silent.

Meanwhile Van Braam stood waiting for the Frenchman's answer. His face was impassive, but Lusignan noticed that his hand stole to the hilt of his sword. For in the old soldier's brain there was a stern resolve. In case Reparti refused to fight, there would be a sudden flash of steel, a quick thrust — and Alfrede would be free.

But, whatever else he was, Reparti was no coward. He was a man easily moved to fits of insane rage in which he lost sight of everything save the single desire to slay the enemy who had roused him. It was upon this characteristic that Van Braam had shrewdly counted when he laid his plan, and he had not miscalculated. The Frenchman had no thought of evading the encounter. As soon as he could

find utterance from the wine that strangled him, he roared out that the Dutchman should be food for dogs in five minutes.

Bigot at once took it upon himself to arrange the affair. "Who will be your second?" he asked Van Braam.

"I will serve in that capacity, if he will accept me," exclaimed Lusignan eagerly.

"Thank you, my friend," said Van Braam; "I shall not forget your kindness."

"You will not have time in which to do so," sneered Reparti. "Deschenaux, will you act for me?"

Deschenaux replied in the affirmative, and the two seconds thus chosen drew apart to arrange the details.

"We shall have it in the garden," called Bigot after them. "*Mon Dieu!* This is no pin-pricking contest. Blood will flow in rivulets, and I do not want it on my floors."

He called a servant and instructed him to have a plot of snow trampled down hard and covered with ashes in order to improve the footing. Soon after these directions were given, the seconds returned and announced that they had agreed upon preliminaries. The conflict was to be with swords, each man to fight in his shirt-sleeves, and the combat to be à *l'outrance*, that is, until one man was dead or disabled.

"Very well," said Bigot, "now to the garden. But first the principals may as well prepare themselves where it is warm and comfortable. Lieutenant Lusignan, take your champion into another room. Hertel, shall I send for a priest?"

"Bah, no!" exclaimed Reparti. "'T is true I have not confessed and am in deadly sin, but I have no thought of allowing myself to be killed."

In the room which Bigot indicated, Van Braam, with Lusignan's solicitous aid, removed his coat and waistcoat,

buckled tighter his belt, and otherwise arranged his clothes so that his movements might be as free as possible. When all these things were done, he plumped down upon his knees; and for a minute's time Lusignan heard him utter in reverent tone a short petition in a language which the lieutenant at least did not understand.

"May the Virgin and the Saints aid you!" said the lieutenant, when Van Braam had risen. "You are a brave and good man."

"I owe much to you for your assistance," said Van Braam gratefully. "I trust that it will not lead you into difficulties. All that you need do is to see that there is no interference. If God so wills it, I will win; if not — I am but an old man. As your countrymen say, *voilà tout!*"

"I think the conflict will be a fair one," said the lieutenant. "I am rejoiced that the officers from France are here. They are my friends and will countenance no foul play."

In silence they shook hands, and then returned to the dining-hall, where they found the other principal and his second waiting. The whole party left the palace and entered the garden.

"*Parbleu!* 't is a somewhat harsh preliminary to a wedding," said Bigot to some of the gentlemen, as they set foot in the snow. "But I expect the bridegroom to escape scathless, else I would not permit the conflict. Reparti is an unchained devil. This Dutchman will not last a moment."

When the principals faced each other on the spot which the servants had prepared, it certainly looked as if the intendant's prophecy would prove true. Had such a gladiator as the Frenchman stood forth upon the sands of the amphitheater in olden days, the Roman populace to a man would blithely have bet their sesterces upon him. A

giant in size, with craggy neck, thick arms, and a mighty chest, he was yet agile and free in motion as a panther. He was at the age when the vital forces attain their maximum, and decay has not yet begun its deadly work. He had been in many conflicts, and never yet had met an equal. His opponent was scarcely above the middle size, and was undeniably an old man. His hair was thin and gray; his step lacked that elasticity that belongs to youth only. His strength lay chiefly in things not visible to the eye. Since early youth he had been a soldier; he had fought at Dettingen, Fontenoy, Laffeldt, Cartagena, and many another of the great battles and sieges of that warlike century. Stern necessity had made him cool and collected in action; and, as so much hinged upon the issue, he would be unusually so upon this occasion. He had in him that "tincture of Calvinism" than which there is nothing better to stiffen a battle line; and finally, and not least of all, he knew that he was clad in the strong armor of a righteous cause.

When all was in readiness, the old soldier glanced for a moment across the stretch of snow at the prison, a hundred yards away. One of those little windows, he knew, belonged to Randolph's cell.

"Vatefer may pe de oudcome," he said softly to himself, "I vish dot Charles could pe looking. He vould at least know dot old Van Braam has tone his pest."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE WATCHER AT THE WINDOW

AFTER Van Braam left him, Randolph paced up and down in his cell, now in silence and now breaking forth in bitter curses against the cruel fate that held him helpless in such a crisis. Conjectures were wholly useless; but, as the hours dragged slowly by, he could think of nothing save Alfrede's probable decision. It was with a vast sense of relief that toward noon he heard the door of his cell unlocked and saw the face of his keeper.

"M'sieu', a letter for you."

Feverishly the prisoner snatched the bit of paper and tore it open. It read as follows:

"Captain Reparti pays his respects to Captain Randolph and begs to inform him that, since he is to be happily wedded this evening to a lady to whom Captain Randolph was once so fortunate as to render a service, Captain Reparti has interested himself in the prisoner's behalf, and has secured from the governor-general a reprieve and the promise of an ultimate pardon. The reprieve goes to the jailer by the same messenger as this note. Captain Reparti hopes that he may receive Captain Randolph's felicitations."

The prisoner tore the message to bits and threw them savagely from him. Had the hated reprieve been in his hands, he would have served it likewise. The worst had come. He was to live; but what was life if all that made life worth while was to be snatched from him — if never

again he was to have her clinging arms about his neck, to look into her dark eyes, to feel her soft lips pressed against his own! A dull vista of years void of hope and sympathy and love stretched out before him. And Alfrede? What of her? Would not hers be the harder lot? Unless she should come to — but, God! that would be to him the bitterest pang of all!

Was he really Charles Randolph, who for five fevered years had dreamed a single dream with but a single ending? Was the dream really to be shattered like some fragile vase struck by a vandal hand? Yes, he was that Randolph; and he had felt sure that the fate which had favored him so long would not desert him at the end. Yet in a few hours the end would come, and he could do nothing! If he could only fight, even though he fell at last, it would not be so hard. But relentless, remorseless as the car of Jugernaut, the catastrophe was coming; and bolts and bars and walls of stone held him helpless. Hope there was none. Montcalm was in Montreal; Alfrede had consented. Only a miracle from heaven could prevent the marriage, and the age of miracles was past. Why was the will of man so feeble and pitiful a thing before the awful frown of fate? His eyes grew bloodshot; he cursed a world in which such wrongs could happen.

With brain on fire, he threw himself upon his little cot and wrestled with the bitterest sorrow of his life. But he found no relief thus. The cell seemed growing smaller. He felt that he would suffocate. He must have air and the light of day. Springing to his feet, he placed the chair beneath the little window, climbed upon it, and looked out.

Through the iron bars, across a hundred yards of snow, loomed the walls of the intendant's palace. He clenched his fists convulsively as he gazed at the building in which he knew his enemies had planned his destruction; but

calmly, coldly, the gray walls leered back at him, and it was as if he saw their owner's exultant sneer. Save a little flock of snowbirds fluttering beneath a tree, not a living thing was in sight. Dull leaden clouds seemed pressing down upon the world, and the bleak bare limbs of the trees waved drunkenly before a chill wind that whistled lugubriously about the walls of the prison.

Presently he saw a number of servants come out of a doorway with pails in their hands. Dully he watched them trample down a plot of snow, and then empty the pails, which seemed to contain ashes, over it. Hardly was this done when another door opened, and a score of gentlemen issued from it and made their way to the spot where the servants had been working. Who were they? he wondered idly. At first he recognized only the short figure of Bigot; but soon the group reached the bit of ash-covered snow, and then all but two, who had been screened from sight by the others, fell back a little. The two were bareheaded and in their shirt-sleeves, and each held a naked sword. With a start that almost unhinged his understanding, the prisoner realized that one was Captain Reparti, the other Captain Van Braam.

In a flash he understood all. Jacob Van Braam, the old soldier he had found sick and penniless in Alexandria and had rescued from death or the hopeless career of a redemptioner, was about to stake his life in an attempt to secure his friend's happiness. A wave of hope swept over the prisoner; a flood of grateful tears gushed into his eyes.

But there was little time for thought. Two other men, likewise with drawn weapons, took their stations not far from the principals; the intendant stepped out from the group; the combatants stood at salute; and then Randolph knew, though he did not hear the words, that Bigot said:

"Allez, messieurs!"

Instantly the principals crossed swords. With a roar that even Randolph heard, Reparti rushed upon his antagonist, thinking to beat down his guard and end the conflict in an instant. So fiery was his onset that to the watcher at the window it seemed that his antagonist must go down before it. The Dutchman did, indeed, give back somewhat; but, to Randolph's joy, he parried all attacks without seemingly sustaining any injury, and retorted with thrusts so vigorous that Reparti presently appeared to give over his attempt to overwhelm him and to settle down to a steadier and not too close conflict. Soon it became apparent that the Frenchman, foiled in his first expectation, was resolved to make the fight a test of endurance. Randolph's heart sank, for how, thought he, could an old man hope to endure in such a contest with one of Reparti's giant strength? He imagined that already Van Braam's movements were slower and less vigorous. Evidently the Dutchman realized his weakness, for he took the offensive. One by one Randolph saw him try the tricks they had so often rehearsed together in the old days at Eastover. One by one they were foiled by Reparti's vigilance and strength of wrist and arm.

Minute after minute steel clashed against steel. The crowd, which had at first jeered noisily, now watched the conflict in tense silence. Conscious that he was disappointing his friends, the Frenchman again sprang forward and pressed his antagonist. The old man rallied his waning forces, and once more beat him back. Again both combatants fenced cautiously. Presently Van Braam began undeniably to tire. A third onslaught by Reparti was not in vain; the prisoner could see a slowly expanding spot of red upon Van Braam's white shirt. Evidently the combat was to have but one ending. A few more minutes of play, and then, his strength exhausted, the old soldier must

succumb. Randolph's hopes, which had risen high, now sank again.

"Oh, God!" he cried wildly, "have I not enough sorrow, without being obliged to see my truest friend cut to pieces before my eyes? If I, with my strength, could only stand in his place! But I am helpless! helpless!"

The end came even sooner than he expected. Suddenly, at a moment when the conflict was not close, Van Braam took as long a step forward with his right foot as it was possible for him to do, threw his body forward and downward until it rested on his thigh, and, with head dropped low, made a desperate lunge at his adversary. "My God!" thought Randolph, "'t is La Tousche's *estocade de pied ferme!*" He knew that the *dénouement* was come, for this *développement* is of so exaggerated a character that a smart recovery, especially where the footing is so insecure as was now the case, is impossible, and, if the thrust fails, the person attempting it is at his enemy's mercy. But, thank God! it had not failed. Caught off his guard for once, Reparti made a desperate attempt to parry. His blade forced Van Braam's weapon to one side, but not enough. The keen point entered his right breast. His sword fell from his nerveless grasp; and, staggering backward, his great body dropped into the snow.

For a moment the prisoner was stupefied by so unexpected a finale. Then a shout burst from his lips that echoed through the prison and carried even to the group in the garden. Tearing his handkerchief from his pocket, he waved it wildly through the bars of his little window.

The old soldier heard the shout. He turned toward the prison and saw the bit of fluttering white. Drawing himself erect, he gave with the utmost precision a military salute.

Meanwhile all except the victor had crowded round the prostrate Frenchman. Presently Lusiguan drew apart from the rest and approached his principal.

"He is not dead," said the lieutenant; "but there will be no bridegroom tonight nor for some weeks at least. *Parbleu!* that lunge was magnificent!"

"I was at the end of my resources," said Van Braam, who was still breathing heavily, but was none the worse for the encounter save for a slight gash in his shoulder. "I could think of nothing else but that one *botte*, so I tried it. If it had failed, it would be I who is lying there. It did not go where I aimed, but it was a good stroke — for an old man. For the time being mademoiselle is safe."

CHAPTER XXVII

A BASKET OF WINE

FOUR days after the duel, the Marquis de Montcalm at Montreal received Van Braam's letter. After an interview with the Chevalier de Lévis he entered a *carriole* and, with no other companion than the driver, started for Quebec. Now along the snow-covered road, now down the frozen river, they glided with marvelous swiftness. Around them, lighted by the oblique rays of the pale winter sun, spread an illimitable white mantle from which the dry wind swept into their faces clouds of icy particles that stung like needles. The mournful silence was broken only by the tinkling bells on the horses and at rare intervals by the yelping of some cur as the *carriole* passed the thatched cabin of a *habitant*. As the sun sank beneath the horizon, the stars lighted their lamps and shone in myriads in the immaculate azure, and in the north appeared the shifting lights of the aurora borealis. Clumps of fir and larch trees, with their snow-laden branches, seemed in the obscurity like hovering phantoms, and only at rare intervals did some little light scintillating in the distance give proof that the region was not a solitude. It was a lonely journey; and often did the soldier, as he looked upon this hyperborean nature from beneath his robes of fur, think of the wastes of snow and wintry sea that stretched between him and sunny Candiac, the lodestar of all his hopes and dreams.

Three days of almost continuous travel brought him to Quebec. At once he visited Alfrede and learned from her

and from the baron the story of the trial and of the events that followed. Though he rejoiced that he had arrived in time, his southern blood took fire at what he heard. His resolution was soon taken. Returning to his quarters, he sent messengers to Vaudreuil and Bigot asking for an immediate interview with them at the Château de St. Louis.

"Have you the pardon ready for my signature?" he asked blandly of the governor, when he was in their presence.

Vaudreuil stirred uneasily in his chair, and Bigot smiled cynically at the ceiling. "To what pardon do you refer?" the governor asked, striving to simulate surprise.

"To that of the English prisoner, Captain Randolph, of course."

"I have no pardon for Captain Randolph," snarled the governor. "He has been convicted and must suffer the penalty for his treachery."

"But you gave him a reprieve," suggested the soldier, "and promised a pardon."

"I have never thought of pardoning him," declared the governor mendaciously.

"It is evident that you have been misinformed," said Bigot. "The Marquis de Vaudreuil has always spoken of hanging the prisoner, and I — I think he should be hanged."

Montcalm looked at both men keenly. "Messieurs," he said, with curling lip, "you may as well drop the mask. I have proof conclusive that both of you have been endeavoring to force Mademoiselle de Saint-Pierre to wed Captain Reparti, and that the plan was only frustrated by the courage and skill of Captain Van Braam. I even suspect that one, if not both, of you was concerned in manufacturing evidence against this Englishman, and that he is entirely innocent."

Bigot bit his lip but did not cease to smile. As for the governor, he fairly foamed with rage. "*Sangdieu!*" he cried, "these are monstrous charges to make against the king's highest officers in these colonies."

"That I should make them proves that I am in earnest," said the general sternly, his hand upon the hilt of his sword. "Messieurs, this thing must stop. I, Montcalm, will not allow it. Mademoiselle de Saint-Pierre is the daughter of a dead friend who once saved my life in battle. She is my ward; I am responsible for her happiness. Nor will I allow the execution of this Englishman. I believe him innocent. You have no legal power to execute him until his sentence has been confirmed by the king."

"I am your superior," shrieked the governor. "I will do as I please."

Montcalm strode forward with a look in his keen eyes that chilled them. "You are the superior," he said, in an icy voice; "but I command the troops from France. Whom, think you, would they obey, in case of a conflict between us? You, sitting safely at home, planning scalping parties against defenseless women and children, or the victor of Chouaguen, of William Henry, of Carillon? Let there be peace between us for the sake of next year's campaign, but this marriage must be thought of no longer. The prisoner's case must be submitted to the king. If you persevere in either matter, I swear by God and the Saints that I will seize the government and defend the colony as a dictator, and that neither of you shall escape alive. That is my ultimatum."

So saying, the soldier turned contemptuously upon his heel and departed. Vaudreuil and Bigot presently separated, each swearing shrilly that Montcalm's threat should be disregarded, but neither believing the other's asseverations nor his own.

Montcalm went at once to see Alfrede. To her he told the story of the interview.

"While I live," said he, before he went, "you shall be safe. Captain Randolph will be in little danger until we can hear from France. Perhaps by that time the plot against him will be exposed, or the war will have ended. Vaudreuil and Bigot know that I am the stronger and that I keep my word."

These assurances greatly cheered the girl, yet she was filled with apprehensions. Until far into the night she revolved the matter in her mind. For herself she felt little fear, but she saw that her lover was still in danger. The case against him seemed clear, and the influence of Vaudreuil and Bigot, which was powerful at Versailles, would doubtless be exerted to the full against him. The king would confirm the sentence. And when the news that he had done so should reach Quebec, even Montcalm could not stay the execution. But the submission would take time, and time gives opportunity for many things. She would not be idle. All that a great love could accomplish should be done. Reflecting thus, she conceived an idea and made a resolve. After kneeling for some time beside her bed whispering a prayer to heaven for guidance, she felt so much comforted that presently she fell asleep.

Next morning she told Toinette what Montcalm had said. With her usual quickness, that young person at once saw the danger to which Randolph was still exposed. "If the king confirms the sentence, your lover must still die," she said.

Alfrede put her arms round Toinette, and whispered something in her ear. Toinette instantly looked at her with wide-open eyes that sparkled with admiration.

"How romantic that will be!" she cried. "I will help you!"

Alfrede explained in detail what she had in mind. Then they sought an interview with the baron.

"*Ma foi!*" he cried, holding up his hands in pretended horror, "but that is a conspiracy!"

"*Eh, bien,* are we not pretty enough to play the part?" demanded Toinette lightly.

"But it would mean the dungeon for all of us, if we should be discovered," he objected.

"We do not wish you to join in it," Alfrede hastened to explain. "We only want you to shut your eyes."

"*Mon Dieu!* Mademoiselle, do you doubt my courage?" he demanded, with some asperity.

"Tut, tut, papa!" chided Toinette, kissing him. "It is only that it would be a useless risk. Should I be imprisoned, I shall make love to the jailer, and I know he will let me out. You they might really punish. Of course, you will let us?" And again she kissed him.

Who could resist such pleaders? Certainly not the baron. "It is a grave risk for us all," he said finally. "I ought not to permit it, but I will not hinder you. St. Anne, you are brave demoiselles! How do you — but I must not know. Do what you will, but do not let me know what you are doing."

In high feather at this first success, they proceeded to the next step. Alfrede summoned her old *bonne*, Jeanne, and told her that she wished an interview with her and Sergeant Gerard. The same evening these two, so long associated with the fortunes of the family of Saint-Pierre, appeared. Alfrede closed the door carefully, and in a low voice told them her desires.

The old sergeant listened with many shrugs of his shoulders and many shakings of his head.

"*C'est impossible!*" he said decisively, when she had finished. "Think of the danger!"

"I know I am asking too much, Gerard," said the girl miserably. "But I must have help, and I thought first of you. If we succeed, you shall have enough money to establish the little shop at Nantes that you so often talk about; if we fail, I will take the punishment."

"A million francs alone would not tempt me," the soldier exclaimed earnestly. "But why, little one, do you wish to save this Englishman?"

"Do you remember when we were captured by the Iroquois, Gerard? Who was it saved me? Did you not think it a brave and gallant deed? Aye, surely, I have heard you say so many times. Now that he is at the mercy of cruel and treacherous enemies, shall we let him perish? Besides," she continued, sobbing, "I love him, Gerard, I love him!"

There were tears in Jeanne's eyes. Her arms went round Alfrede.

"Gerard," she said, "this is our only child. Have we not both loved her? What does it matter what becomes of us, for we are old?"

A tender look came into the old soldier's grizzled face. "Say no more," he said. "I will undertake it. And be sure that old Gerard will do his best."

The girl kissed Jeanne; then she kissed Gerard. "I love you both dearly, dearly," she said, through tears. "I feel so selfish in asking it; but, oh, I so need help!"

"Have you any plan?" asked Gerard presently.

"One came to me last night. I have thought it all out, but one point."

She explained what she meant to do. Both listened intently. As she proceeded, the look of doubt on Gerard's face gradually gave way and was replaced by one of confidence.

"*Mon Dieu!*" cried he, when she had finished. "You

are a general. You would have vanquished Maréchal Saxe himself."

"No," said Alfrede, "I am only a poor weak girl with one great task to perform. I know I must not fail. Do you think we can find a way to slip the weapons in?"

"*Sans doute*," said Gerard, "though it will be difficult."

An hour later, after much further planning, Gerard departed, carrying with him a heavy purse of gold. Next morning Jeanne and the two girls rode out to the château on the seigniory. And at midnight the three busied themselves for a long time in a little garret which was entered by a secret door. In the morning Alfrede and Toinette returned to town, but Jeanne remained in the château.

Then followed a long period of waiting. February, March, April, dragged slowly away. The snow dissolved into great pools of slush; the frost-bound earth lay oozy and black on the southern slopes; the ice in the river broke up with thunderous reports like those of artillery; from the southward long files of clamorous wildfowl streamed to their summer homes in the silent North. Vessels dropped down the river with dispatches for France, and hardly were they gone ere others, bearing meager supplies for the hard-pressed colony, anchored in the harbor. "It is not what we asked for," said Montcalm to Bougainville, who had been his messenger to Versailles; "but a little is welcome to those who have nothing."

At last the land lay free from ice. The buds swelled and burst; the leaves came forth; and in its covert blossomed the Canadian violet. With jocund air the landscape turned from the cold tyranny of winter to receive kisses from the balmy lips of spring and welcome its gifts of sunshine and shower. Late as comes the summer at Quebec, it atones for

its long delay by appearing in its loveliest and most enticing form.

During all these months Randolph remained in prison. But the rigor of his confinement was relaxed somewhat, and his friends were allowed to visit him freely. Numbers came, for, besides Van Braam, the La Vallières, and Alfrede, there were many persons who felt a kindly interest in the young Virginian and believed him innocent. For a reason that Randolph did not then understand, the number of such visitors during the first week in May was unusually great; some came who had never done so before. Among the many were the baron, Toinette, and Alfrede. Just as they were taking their departure, and when the baron was already outside, Alfrede took from underneath her cloak a letter and slipped it into his hand.

"I want you to read it very carefully," she whispered.

"You may be sure I will do that," he said, taking her hand as well as what she held out to him, while Toinette considerately turned her back.

When the girls were gone, he read the letter and found it even more interesting than he had anticipated, for it informed him that a plan was afoot to rescue him and named the night of the fifteenth, one week away, for the attempt.

"My brave Alfrede! my brave Alfrede!" he said over and over again, when he had finished.

The next seven days were long ones to the Virginian. Books palled upon him. He could not keep his mind off the coming venture. The letter contained no hint of how the implements he was to use in the escape were to be brought to him. Would his friends manage to evade the vigilance of the guards? was the anxious question that ran incessantly through his brain. His only relief was in exercise, of which he each day took as much as the narrow

limits of his cell permitted, for he was determined not to allow his physical energies to be impaired by his imprisonment. The letter he memorized, then burned.

The seventh day came at last, and proved as long as all the others combined. Morning and half the afternoon passed without incident. His hopes began to sink. Had the plot been discovered? Had Alfrede failed to find a way to introduce the implements he would need? It was with a vast sense of satisfaction that about four o'clock he received the keeper's announcement that he was to have a visitor. When the door opened again, it disclosed the kindly features of none other than the Marquis de Montcalm. It was not the general's first visit, for his interest in Alfrede, in the young Virginian himself, and perhaps also his hatred for Vaudreuil, had caused him to display feelings of humanity that did him honor. The previous visits had been a source of great satisfaction to the prisoner, but the present seemed somewhat inopportune; Randolph felt a secret sense of disappointment. The marquis seated himself, and for some time the talk was of commonplaces.

"Have you any news from Europe?" asked Randolph presently.

"Chevalier Bougainville arrived some days ago with ships from France. He brought the first direct tidings since autumn."

"Your news from Candiac was good, I trust."

A shadow passed across the great man's face.

"Both happy and sad," he said at last. "The chevalier brings me word that my eldest daughter is happily married, and that my son the count is soon to be so. But just as the chevalier sailed, came news of the death of one of my daughters. Which one, alas, he could not learn. I think it must be poor Mirète. She was delicate. I loved her very much."

Randolph had often heard Alfrede describe Montcalm's affection for his family. He saw now that she had never exaggerated. He hastened to offer his sympathy.

"Such is the soldier's life," said Montcalm, after thanking him. "I have not seen my wife and children for three years. We are happy at Candiac. I hope that you may one day see the life we lead there. But it may be that I shall never know whether it was Mirète or another."

"Think you there is a prospect for peace?" asked Randolph, not unwilling to turn from so painful a subject.

"None, I fear. From the news received I judge that last year's campaign on the Continent was in no way decisive. King Frederick was surprised and lost a battle to the Austrians at Hochkirk, but showed himself as great in defeat as in victory. In spite of the odds against him, he will probably hold out for another campaign at least — perhaps indefinitely. I could almost wish that he will, for he is a great soldier — the greatest of the age. In western Germany, our armies gained some successes but experienced an equal number of reverses. At sea, your king controls, which makes it hard for us in New France."

"I had hoped," said Randolph, "that all parties might be weary of the expenditure of so much blood and treasure."

"Peace would solve your troubles, Captain Randolph, as well as our own. I am sorely grieved to see you confined so long. You are not guilty. Of that I have long been convinced, yet I have no proof. My power, as you know, is limited to military matters, and even in that field I have a superior. But I am doing what I can for you."

"That I well know, your Excellency," said Randolph gratefully. "You have shown wonderful interest in me, and I have thanked God many times that you believed me true to my honor as a soldier."

"At least, you need be under little apprehension for

some months to come," said the marquis. "The English cruisers are very active. The papers concerning your sentence may be taken. Even if they reach the king, his answer may suffer such a fate. The mouth of the St. Lawrence is likely to be corked as tightly as a bottle of champagne this summer. Many things may happen meantime."

"Yes, indeed! Perhaps I may even have an opportunity to escape."

The marquis leant nearer to the prisoner. "If you do," he said, in a low voice, "do not hesitate to embrace it. Your parole is, of course, no longer binding."

"You are very generous," said Randolph, happy that Montcalm felt thus about the parole.

"As, however, you may be compelled to remain in this place for some time longer," the Marquis continued, in a louder voice, "I have brought you a small present to help render your stay more tolerable."

He rose and went to the table upon which he had on his first arrival deposited a small basket. Partially drawing aside the covering, he disclosed some bottles of wine. The little kindness touched Randolph greatly, and he was profuse of thanks. The marquis then took his leave, bidding the prisoner to be of good cheer.

"Do not forget," he said meaningly, "that a woman, especially a beautiful woman, can accomplish wonders."

"A great man and a noble one," said Randolph to himself, after his guest was gone. "His gift is welcome, yet I could wish that the basket contained something very different from wine. That was a strange remark about a woman. One might almost think that he has some inkling of Alfrede's plans."

As he had nothing better to do, he proceeded to unpack the basket. After removing the covering, he took out

several bottles of a rare vintage, and came presently to a carefully wrapped package.

"That cannot be another bottle of wine," he thought to himself. "Doubtless it contains some other delicacy or perhaps some other gift of the marquis's generosity."

With mildly heightened interest he proceeded to untie the cord. But he was utterly unprepared for the sight that greeted his eyes when the task of unwrapping the package was accomplished. For inside was a long flint-lock pistol, a little flask of powder and a number of bullets, two stout thongs of rawhide, a curiously shaped bandage of cloth with straps attached, and a slip of paper.

"Gracious powers," he said involuntarily, "my mind must be affected!"

But his sense of touch quickly convinced him that the articles in question were not mere ethereal phantoms but things that possessed concrete reality. Hastily concealing the pistol and other instruments in his bedding, he read the note. It was in Alfrede's handwriting, and ran as follows:

"I am sending the needed articles by a *sure* messenger. I had hoped to introduce them in some other way but found I could not. It is a great risk for him, but I trust that suspicion will be so divided among your other visitors that no one can know the truth with certainty. The countersign is 'Ville Marie.' I am praying God to aid you."

Many times, with blurred eyesight, he read the note. Then with impatient eagerness he awaited the hour set for action. When twilight fell, the keeper brought the evening meal. The prisoner ate with keen relish and partook sparingly of one of the bottles of wine. Then, when the little table had been cleared and he was again alone, he began by the light of a tiny candle to indite a letter which, when completed, was as follows:

"To the Marquis Vaudreuil, Monsieur Bigot, Captain Reparti, and others of La Grande Société whom I am proud to number among my Enemies: — I feel that it would be most ungracious on my Part to take leave of your Hospitality without a Word of Farewell. I am aware that if you pursue me with half the Persistency with which you plunder the People and your King, I shall have a hard Race. Yet I shall escape. The St. Lawrence is long, but I am a good Boatman; and I shall have some Hours the Start. Later in the Year I hope to return to Quebec. But I shall not come alone, and I expect our Parts to be reversed. My Compliments, Messieurs. Adieu.

"Your Servant Most Obedient,

"CHARLES RANDOLPH."

"Escape or death can be my only alternative after that," he said to himself. "I could never come back a prisoner, after having written such a letter."

For two or three hours he sat in his chair with what composure he could muster, waiting. At ten o'clock he drew the pistol and other articles from their place of concealment, and examined them more carefully. He found that the weapon was already loaded, but he took the precaution to pour a little more powder from the flask into the priming-pan. The flask itself, the package of bullets, and the bandage he put into his pockets. Next he blew out the candle, and, without removing any of his clothes, got into bed with the pistol in his hand to wait for midnight, the hour at which his keeper was accustomed to come in and inspect the cell in order to discover whether the prisoner was trying to escape.

All had thus far gone well. But as Randolph lay there in the darkness, he could do nothing but wonder whether the keeper would make the visit. Two or three times in as many months he had failed to do so. Would this be such a night? The long suspense was maddening.

CHAPTER XXVIII

BEHIND THE LATTICE

AT last the prisoner heard steps in the corridor without. A key grated in the lock and the door opened; Dent-de-Loup entered, bearing a lighted candle. Randolph pretended not to be aroused, and the keeper closed and locked the door. Then, after a glance out of his evil eyes at the prisoner, he walked to the window. Mounting a chair, he examined and shook the bars. Satisfied that they were intact, he stepped to the floor once more and turned toward the bed.

He found himself looking into the capacious muzzle of a pistol.

"Set the candle on the table," ordered Randolph.

He spoke the words in a low voice, but with such an undertone of menace that the keeper hastened to comply.

"Take off your hat and coat."

Reluctantly the man obeyed.

"Now lie face downward on that bed."

"M'sieu'" — began the keeper, protestingly.

"Not a word!" exclaimed Randolph fiercely. "Dent-de-Loup, you have been the keeper for some months; now it is my turn. If you do not obey, you will in five seconds be as dead as the murderer you watched kicking on the gallows yesterday."

Thoroughly cowed, the keeper did as he was ordered. Randolph compelled him to cross his wrists behind his back and bound them together securely with one of the

rawhide thongs. Next he did the same to the man's ankles. Then he rolled him over on his back.

"Now, Dent-de-Loup," said Randolph, taking the bandage out of his pocket, "comes a part of the procedure which I much regret. You have not been a particular friend of mine. On divers occasions you have more than hinted that you thought I would grace the scaffold. Yet I dislike to deprive any man for six or seven hours of the use of his mouth, especially when he has so beautiful a one as you have. But I cannot have you crying out when I am gone. I must be far down the river when the alarm is given. Therefore I shall be compelled, much as I dislike the thought, to put this gag in your mouth. It is, as you will observe, made of clean cloth and will be as comfortable as such a thing can be. For this you should be duly grateful to the kind friends who provided it. Had I been left to my own devices, I would probably have stuffed a dirty stocking into your mouth and fastened it there with my belt. But first you must tell me what key unlocks the outer door."

"Mercy, m'sieu'. Grant me my life and I will tell all," begged the keeper, who could not rid his mind of the unpleasant thought that perhaps this mad Bostonnais might end by inserting the point of a knife between his ribs. "*Mon Dieu!* I did but jest about the scaffold."

"T was likely to be a sorry jest for me," said Randolph. "But we lose time, and I bear no malice. Where is the key that unlocks the outer door?"

"In the pocket of my coat, m'sieu'. The largest is the one you wish."

Randolph quickly found the keys.

"The largest, you say? Is that true, Dent-de-Loup? Remember, if it is not, I shall return; and you will be likely to die in a very unpleasant fashion."

"May the Virgin cease to guard me, if I am lying, m'sieu," said the keeper with great sincerity.

"Eh, well, then I shall shortly tell you good-by. Though I have been your guest so long, I cannot truthfully say that I have enjoyed your hospitality. This hat and this long coat of yours I shall wear as a disguise; the clothes I am leaving will more than make good the loss."

So saying, Randolph donned the hat and coat. Then he carefully adjusted the gag and examined the lashings which held the prisoner, after which he tied the ends to the sides of the bed so that he could not give the alarm by rolling off on to the floor.

"Now, Dent-de-Loup," he said gayly, after placing the pistol beneath his coat, "I must say adieu. Give my regards to the jailer, and be sure that this letter which I place on the table reaches the persons for whom it is intended. *Bonsoir, Dent-de-Loup, bonsoir.*"

So saying, he unlocked the door, passed through it, relocked it, walked confidently down to the stairway, descended this, and came to the outer door. Fitting the largest key into the lock, he soon had this door open also. He stepped outside. He was free.

The night was moonless, but a myriad of stars shone down upon the earth, rendering objects easily distinguishable. Never had the air seemed so deliciously balmy.

He relocked the door and put the keys into his pocket. Then he prepared to pass the sentinel who paced before the prison. It was part of Alfrede's plan that this man should be in the secret; but, to be prepared against all contingencies, Randolph kept his pistol ready for use. He had taken only a few steps when the sentinel saw him. There was a moment of awful suspense. Then the sentinel merely saluted and did not challenge. Randolph returned the salute and walked on. Skirting the garden of the

intendancy, he entered the street called Palace Hill and walked briskly toward the Upper Town.

He was beginning to congratulate himself over the fact that safety seemed assured when a soldier stepped out of the shadow of a tall rock, and, leveling his piece, cried shrilly:

“*Qui vive!*”

“*France.*”

“*Le mot d’ordre ?*”

“*Ville Marie,*” Randolph said, not forgetting Alfred’s note.

The soldier seemed to hesitate. He was a slight fellow, and Randolph was just considering whether or not to spring upon him and overpower him before he could give the alarm, when the sentinel’s doubts seemed to vanish and he said:

“*Passez !*”

Willingly enough, Randolph availed himself of the permission. But he had gone only a little distance further when some one called:

“Charles!”

The voice sounded strangely familiar; but, on turning round, he could see no one but the sentinel, who, to his alarm, was running after him. Randolph was about to take to his heels and trust to his fleetness of foot to escape when again he heard the voice. His desire to run vanished completely. A moment more, and the sentinel was up with him.

It is the custom among Frenchmen to salute each other upon the cheeks. But had any good dame been looking out of the dormer window of the little house across the street, she would have been vastly astonished at the frequency and fervency of the salutations in which these be-coated, be-trousered figures now indulged.

"Sweetheart, you gave me a terrible scare," said Randolph presently, when the first ecstasies had somewhat abated.

"I hoped you would run," said the girl, laughing. "But we must not stay here longer. We can talk as we are walking."

"Surely you are not alone," he said anxiously.

"No. Brave Gerard is watching us from the shadow of that house yonder. You are to go at once to the St. John's bastion. There are no sentinels nearer than St. John's Gate, and Gerard has a rope to help you down the wall. Escape will be easy. I will go that far myself."

"My brave girl! My sweet Alfred! How well you have planned it!"

"You saved me once. I had a debt to pay. I knew I must not fail."

"And was that all?" he asked meaningly.

"*Ciel!* how conceited men are! Is not that enough?"

"Not for me. Shall I go back to the prison?"

"Don't go!" She begged so tenderly yet withal so roguishly that Randolph was utterly unable to resist temptation.

Gerard now stepped from the shadow, and, without waiting for them to join him, walked on, up the street. They followed.

"How did they dispose of the sentinel?" asked Randolph presently.

"Gerard and Lieutenant Lusignan waylaid him on his way to his post. They overpowered and tied him and hid him in a barn. Then the lieutenant took his clothes and gun. It is he who is now standing guard."

"Brave Gerard! Brave Lusignan! I hope they will not get into trouble."

"The risk is great; but, if all goes well, I think they will

be safe. In an hour or two the lieutenant will disappear. The sentinel and the keeper will not be found till morning, and the affair will remain a mystery. I contrived to have so many people visit you last week that it will be difficult to know whom to suspect."

"Does Captain Van Braam know of the plan?"

"Nothing at all. I believed he would think his parole would not allow him to assist. Besides, I knew he would be one of the first suspected. To shield him, I took care that he should spend the evening at a dinner given by a family in the Lower Town. I shall tell him when you are safe."

Talking thus, they traversed the deserted streets, passed by numerous gardens and villas, and came presently to the bastion. Gerard was awaiting them.

"Sergeant Gerard," said Randolph feelingly, "you are a brave man. I shall never forget my obligation."

"You saved mademoiselle," said the old soldier simply. "She asked me to help. I could not refuse."

"You are to follow the same road we used last autumn," said Alfrede. "When you reach the château, rap on the door to the great hall, and Jeanne will admit you. Now you must go. It is a long walk, and you must be there by morning. Besides, Gerard must have time to escort me home and then go to the river front and sink a canoe so that it will be thought you have gone down the river."

"Is she not a general, Gerard?" asked Randolph admiringly.

"Even Maréchal Saxe was a poorer one, monsieur le capitaine. If all French generals were as brilliant as she, you would never take New France."

Tenderly Randolph bade the girl good-by, gave the old sergeant a hearty hand-shake, and stepped into one of the embrasures. There he put his foot in a loop of the rope

which Gerard had ready, and was soon on the ground without. With a last wave of the hand to the two faces peering down upon him, he strode forward, and was soon on the road leading to his destination.

Above him the pines whispered in a breeze that brought to his nostrils the fragrant scent of spring blossoms. The joy of being in God's free air once more, out of the power of his enemies, intoxicated him. He did not mind the fatigue. He made such good use of his time that the scattered village of the seigniory and the old stone mill were still in darkness when he passed them. Without meeting any one, he reached the château and knocked as Alfrede had directed. The door was immediately opened, and in a moment he was inside with Jeanne.

"Did all go well?" she asked anxiously.

"Everything! There was not a single hitch — thanks to my good friends, not least of whom I consider you and your brave Gerard."

"T was Alfrede's planning, monsieur," she said proudly. "We were only instruments."

"But very efficient ones," he protested.

After he had related everything that had occurred, she conducted him up two flights of stairs and left him in the little room that she and Alfrede and Toinette had long ago prepared for him. After eating some of the food which Jeanne had thoughtfully placed on the table, he lay down upon the couch. For some time his mind ran back over the events of the last few hours. Then he slept.

When he awoke the sun was streaming in through the lattice which concealed the window of his little chamber. His watch had run down, but from the sun he judged that it was nearing noon. As he looked out, he saw a long procession of *calèches* coming through the village toward

the château and knew that they contained the guests of the *fête* which Alfrede and Toinette had craftily planned to give that day in order to divert all suspicion from the château as the fugitive's hiding place.

Alfrede, Toinette, and the baron were the first to arrive. From his point of vantage Randolph saw them alight, and noticed that both girls glanced curiously up at the lattice. Then came the Marquis and Madame de Vaudreuil, the Marquis de Montcalm, the Chevalier de Lévis, Monsieur Bigot, Monsieur Deschenaux, Monsieur Cadet, and many other notabilities, with their ladies. *La Grande Société* was fully represented, as Alfrede had planned.

The last guest to arrive was Captain Reparti. He was nearly an hour late, and as his *calèche* drew near, Vaudreuil, Bigot, and others of Randolph's enemies hurried out of the house to meet him. Thanks to a peculiar formation of the walls of the château, Randolph was able to hear the conversation that followed.

"Have you any news, Hertel?" called Bigot eagerly, as the captain alighted.

"Not a word, François; but I have sent three canoes filled with Indians in pursuit. He cannot escape. I shall have his scalp by tomorrow evening at latest."

"Before they take it, I hope *les gentilhommes sauvages* will give him a little taste of fire as a punishment for that presumptuous note," said Bigot vindictively.

"Has anything been discovered concerning his accomplices?" asked Deschenaux.

"Nothing," replied Reparti regretfully. "The missing sentinel has been found, tied and gagged like the keeper. But he did not see his assailants and can tell nothing. Captain Van Braam had no direct part in the affair, for I have ascertained beyond a doubt that he was at a house in the Lower Town until long past midnight. *Pardieu!*

the jailer swears it is witchcraft, and I begin to agree with him."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Vaudreuil. "But you are right in thinking the Dutchman had no part in it."

"Who was it then?" asked Bigot.

"I will answer your question by another one. Who was it visited the prisoner a few hours before his escape carrying a basket of wine? *Voilà tout!*"

"It may be true," said Bigot thoughtfully, "but we have no proof. Many others have visited the prisoner of late, and the keeper admitted that he had not searched the cell for weeks. We have been too careless, and now the bird has flown."

As Bigot finished there came a knock on Randolph's door. When he answered in a low voice, the door opened, and Alfrede stepped inside. She was no longer dressed in the uniform of a soldier; she wore a vastly becoming spring gown and looked so altogether sweet and charming that Randolph felt moved to do something at which she pretended great offense.

"Toinette is without," she said warningly.

"Let her stay," said Randolph inhospitably.

"How is my prisoner?" she asked, after an interval. "You know that now I am your jailer."

"I pray God that you may always be so!" he said fervently. "But come hither; I have something to show you."

So saying, he led her to the window. For some moments they stood gazing down upon the group without.

"Is it all true, or are we dreaming?" he whispered.

"Does it seem like dreaming?" she asked, with her face very close to his.

"No!" said he; and he kissed red lips that bravely gave back the caress.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE TRIBES GATHER FOR THE LAST TIME

Faintly as tolls the evening chime,
Our voices keep tune and our oars keep time,
Soon as the woods on shore look dim,
We'll sing at St. Ann's our parting hymn.
Row, brothers, row, the stream runs fast,
The rapids are near, and the daylight 's past.

MOORE.

WHILE Randolph was struggling against the machinations of his enemies in Quebec, emissaries of Vaudreuil were traversing the wintry western wilderness seeking savage allies and scattered bushrangers for what it was believed would be the critical year of the great war.

And now beneath the white limestone cliffs of tortoise-shaped Michilimackinac a motley host was mustering. The French themselves were little more than savages. They wore gay capotes and gaudy sashes or hunting-shirts of smoked deerskin, bordered with fringes and the quills of the porcupine; they painted their faces black and red, and fastened eagle feathers in their long black hair, or plastered it down with a mixture of paint and glue. The Indians were of various tribes; tall naked Ojibwas from the bold coasts of blue Superior, with quivers full of copper-tipped arrows; wild Menomonies and Winnebagoes from the region of Green Bay; Ottawas, wrapped close in gaudy blankets, their fringed leggings fantastically adorned with little tinkling bells and their heads garnished with feathers. Drawing their canoes upon the white beaches, they landed,

stripped sheets of bark to cover their frail lodges, and waited. Lazily they lay about their fires, now laughing at some obscene jest; now dancing some mad dance to the accompaniment of *chichikoue* or war drum; now anxiously watching the medicine man pitch his magic lodge and listening to his inarticulate mumblings as he invoked the spirits; now trembling at wild recitals of witchcraft and necromancy — of mighty okies, bloodless geebi, and grisly weendigoes, of evil manitous that lurked in dens and fastnesses of the forest.

By the middle of May the canoes had ceased to come; and the Black-Robes across the Straits at St. Ignace, where the bones of Père Marquette reposed, summoned the whole band to hear mass. The little church was too small to contain such a multitude; but an altar had been set up outside, and before this they gathered. The missionaries, arrayed in priestly vestments, raised aloft the sacred Host; the whole wild throng knelt, and with discordant voices joined in the hymn of praise, *Te Deum Laudamus*.

Dismissed with priestly benediction, the band returned to their camp upon the island. Again the medicine men consulted the manitou, while their gaping auditory squatted like apes about their mystic tents, listening in fear and awe. The auspices proved favorable; the day wound up with a grand war dance. Far into the night the fires of resinous driftwood glared against the dark foliage of the trees, shone far out over the rippling water, and revealed the frenzied gestures and ferocious stampings of tawny limbs and the contortions of savage visages; while the barbaric drum boomed unceasingly, and the chill air was split with hideous yells.

At length the east glowed with a vivid fire across the waters and through the tops of the jagged fir-trees, while the fading moon hung low in the western sky. The camp

was soon astir; the canoes were launched; bags of maize and bundles of pelts were thrown in; and, amid shots, shouts, and savage yells, the band embarked. Eastward lay their course over depths so clear that the canoes seemed balanced between earth and sky. Above, the watchful gulls circled with harsh cries, while beneath, the armored sturgeon glided slowly over the shimmering sand. Past little islands and bold capes; past the northern shore of the spirit-haunted Manitoulin, landing from time to time to make their camp and cook their *sagamite* of fish and pounded maize; through narrow channels and past mountains that rose high on the northern shore, they plied their paddles, until one afternoon there loomed ahead a line of granite, in whose walls appeared an opening like the mouth of some fossil monster, out of which issued the French River, brown with ooze from rotting leaves and trees and roots.

Thus far all had gone peacefully; but now a medicine man, consulting the Great Spirit, found him unfavorable, and, with those who wearied and those who feared, turned southward to fish among the thirty thousand islands off that iron-bound coast, which, when the pyramids were yet undreamed of, had for ages felt the wash of summer waves and the battering of winter's ice. Up the river undismayed went the rest. Their troubles soon began. Two miles above the river's mouth rapids appeared — no gentle ripple but a spot where the water plunged over rocky ledges, gurgled under drifted trees, boiled in rugged chasms, and filled the wilderness with its unceasing ravings. Canoes were lifted from the water, and, raised on dusky shoulders, were borne through the tangled woods where mosquitoes rose in swarms and tiny black flies burrowed in the smarting flesh. Above, the canoes were launched again, and onward still the voyagers fared.

Now they passed among pine-tufted rocky islands, where patriarchal fir-trees, shaggy with pendant mosses, cast black shadows; while in the water below the bleached limbs of some fallen monarch of the woods formed screen for voracious sharp-toothed muskellunge waiting for his finny prey. Again they passed between walls of gneissic granite, in whose crevices the bearded cedar clung with snake-like roots; while aloft the rock maple, the aspen, and the glistening birch reared their light green foliage beneath the towering white pine. Anon they beheld where some rushing fire had scorched the rocks and left dead, blasted trunks standing amid the blackened stumps and prostrate bodies of comrades half consumed. From behind lichen-clad rocks, the stealthy lynx unseen watched them as they glided by; the awkward porcupine waddled leisurely with rustling quills into the thicket; the loons dived into the brown water; the startled deer, come down to drink, bounded off like huge rabbits; and the giant moose, standing in some cove to escape the flies, plunged shoreward, shaking his huge antlers and wet sides, and, with unwieldy but silent trot, vanished in the labyrinthine wilderness.

At evening they landed. Some cut poles and stripped sheets of bark, and on the shelving rocks built frail camp sheds; others gathered wood, crushed the maize, and in kettles hung on sticks laid over ready rocks boiled the pitance of *sagamite*; while still others sought the reedy heads of bays and lay in wait for deer. The sun dropped behind the hills, but the afterglow of the North long furnished light. The moon rose. From afar came the weird cry of the loon, the howl of the hungry wolf, and the hoarse bellow of the moose. Soon the voyagers slept to rise again when the moon sank to rest and the sun once more shot his beams upward in the east.

Each day was but a replica of the day before. Each

day the warrior saw before him the same tawny shoulders, the same tangled hair, the same sinewy arms plying unceasingly the dripping paddle. Avoiding a labyrinth of lakes and *chenails*, where the stranger might wander aimlessly for weeks, they kept on up the north channel of the river through passages half closed by bare cyclopean blocks, portaged round the Grand Récollet, where the river, dividing into three streams, pours itself with unceasing roar into a foamy caldron, then fared onward to the Five Mile Rapids and still onward, till at length before them spread out the broad expanse of demon-infested Lake Nipissing, where from lodges half hidden in the woods they gathered new recruits. Past craggy shores and verdant isles they glided once again, till they came to the head of a portage track, worn smooth by untold generations of moccasined feet following the great aboriginal route between East and West. Then for forty miles down tributary waters they floated, until they reached the broad and welcome Ottawa. Through or around rapids innumerable, the Deux Rivières, the Rocher Capitaine, the Caribou, the Joachims — down a narrow gorge where the hurrying stream looks neither to the right nor to the left, over the two lakes of the Alumettes, around the sixteen cataracts of the Chats, and down a stretch of water where rapid followed rapid until the river was a mass of milky foam — thus, day by day they fared until they passed the lake of the Chaudière and heard ahead a hoarse roar as if of some raging demon.

It was the cataracts of the Chaudière, where the river, shaking off all restraint, goes foaming and plunging into unfathomed chasms. Here on the brink of the rocky basin, out of which sprang puffs of spray like smoke from the cannon's mouth, gathered all the wild crew. On a wooden platter they placed the last of their tobacco. Solemn

dances and speeches followed, after which, with loud invocations, the offering was thrown into the falls to conciliate the spirit that lurked there.

This ceremony accomplished, they glided on down the foam-flecked river. They passed the rapids of the Long Sault and of Carillon, crossed the Lake of Two Mountains, and one fair day floated on the bosom of the St. Lawrence. Pausing at Montreal for ceremonious welcome, to sell their pelts, and to indulge in wild carouse, they then paddled on again down the great river, and one sunny afternoon in middle June rounded the great promontory and beheld their goal. Firing their guns and shrieking like the demons that they were, they drew toward the wharf to be greeted there with salutes of cannon and by the governor himself.

Thus did the Children of the Wilderness gather for the last time to help their father Onontio against the English.

Throughout all that wild voyage of three hundred leagues one canoe had ever been foremost. In its stern sat a short and fat warrior whose face was disfigured with horrible scars, whose words were heeded by even the most refractory of that savage crew. He was Le Chat, the Ottawa.

In that same canoe sat yet another and slighter form on whom also our eyes have already rested. His dress was that of the savage; his hair was gathered into a miniature scalp-lock. His face and hands were browned by wind and sun until they were as dark as those of the warriors about him, but underneath his fringed clothing the skin shone white. On shore he helped to build the fire of sticks or rear the lodge of bark, or wandered seemingly at will — yet some beady eye was ever on him. In the canoe he plied a paddle with the others, but now and anon, his strength worn out, he

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paused in his labor; and at such times his blue eyes seemed to gaze at other forms and other scenes. He was a boy of ten years, whose name the reader has already guessed. He was young Barnaby Currin, the captive of the Shenandoah.

CHAPTER XXX

THE MEETING ON THE PLATEAU

FOR weeks Captain Randolph lay immured in the little hidden chamber, cut off from the green fields and enticing forests which he viewed longingly from his lattice window. During a long interval he saw no more of Toinette and Alfrede, for the two conspirators had returned to the city, and rightly judged that visits to the manor house might arouse suspicion. The inaction wore upon him almost as much as actual imprisonment had done, and he welcomed the news that Jeanne brought him with his meals. What she had to tell was mostly unimportant, mere gossip often; but one day in mid-June she had a tale that aroused his keenest interest.

"T is said, monsieur le capitaine, that an English fleet is coming up the river," she remarked carelessly, for, with all her interest in the prisoner, she was a stanch patriot. "I do not believe it. I think they would not dare."

For ten days there were rumors and counter rumors. Then one morning the old *bonne* came to his room in a state of great excitement.

"*Hélas!*" she cried, "there is no doubt. The fleet has really come. Some *habitants* have just returned from Quebec who have seen it. It lies anchored off the Isle of Orleans. They say its masts are as numerous as the trees in the forest. *Mon Dieu*, I know not what will become of us!"

The news that so distressed the good dame aroused Randolph to the highest pitch of satisfaction. His prophecy had come true. A blow was about to be struck at the vitals of New France. He could scarce repress a cheer.

At the first rumor of the fleet's approach he had formed a resolution. It was not for him to lie in quiet when great events were in the air; he would join the fleet. Even his plan was ready. He would try to reach the St. Lawrence somewhere above the city, find a boat, and float down past the defenses before daybreak. And he would make the venture that very night.

But once again ill fortune pursued him. For a day or two he had been feeling unwell; and as the hours passed his indisposition developed into a headache so violent that, as it was evident that he should need all of his physical powers for the attempt, he toward evening reluctantly decided that he must postpone the venture. Morning found him worse instead of better, and so weak that he was forced to keep to his bed. Days, in fact, passed without any improvement; and in addition to the pains of illness, he was forced to suffer from the realization that now, when he would have given all for strength, he must lie sick and hidden in that little room, while his countrymen played out the game in which he so much longed to participate.

As he tossed haggard and fever-stricken on his bed, Jeanne, who nursed him, brought vague accounts of the military situation. The English fleet, it appeared, controlled the river below the town, and troops had landed on the Isle of Orleans and Point Lévis, on the latter of which, as Van Braam had prophesied, batteries were being erected with which to bombard the city. There had been skirmishes on land, and on the water an attempt to burn the British fleet; but Randolph gathered that as yet neither party had won any decided advantage. On the night of the twelfth of

July the roar of artillery which came to the château at intervals increased in violence, and he judged that the English batteries had at last opened upon the city.

The next day brought the baron and his household to the château. Soon the sick man's heart was gladdened by a visit from the two girls.

"Why did you leave the city?" he asked weakly, after he had replied to their questions about his condition.

"We were driven hither by the bombardment," Toinette explained. "Your countrymen are most inconsiderate, monsieur le capitaine. One of their shells has already overwhelmed a chimney of our house, and in time I doubt not the whole will be destroyed."

"T is a pity that it should be so," said Randolph regretfully. "I would much prefer that the possession of the city might have been settled by a pitched battle, in which none but actual combatants could suffer."

"*N'importe*," said Toinette confidently. "Quebec is still ours. Monsieur Wolfe shall never step inside, except it be as a prisoner!"

"Is General Wolfe then at the head of the besiegers?" asked Randolph, with interest. "T is said that he distinguished himself greatly at Louisburg, and Captain Van Braam saw him fight gallantly at Dettingen."

"T is Wolfe, beyond a doubt," answered Alfred. "I have seen a proclamation signed with his name. He has landed troops on the island and on Point Lévis, from whence his batteries have just opened on the town."

"What has happened? I have had only rumors and conjectures."

"Montcalm's army occupies lines stretching from the city to the falls of the Montmorency," said Alfred. "The fords of that river have been fortified and are carefully guarded. The water front of the city is defended by many land and

floating batteries. The general thinks that he is safe from direct attack. What he fears is that the governor may spoil his dispositions, or that General Amherst, who is advancing with a large army by way of Lakes St. Sacrement and Champlain, may drive back the weak French force under Bourlamaque, and unite his army with that before the city."

"Have there been conflicts of importance?"

"The afternoon the fleet arrived a storm caused great confusion among the vessels, drove some of the smaller ones ashore and sank others, but subsided too quickly to inflict irreparable damage."

"The winds and waves have ever been the friends, not the enemies, of Britain," said Randolph, under his breath.

"That night," the girl continued, "Vaudreuil attempted to destroy the fleet by fire. He sent down seven fireships, bought of the intendant at an exorbitant price; but Delouche, the boastful coxcomb who had the affair in charge, fired the vessels too soon, and those that did not blow up or run ashore were towed by the English sailors where they would do no harm. Toinette and I witnessed the attempt from Montcalm's headquarters at Beauport. The fireworks were magnificent. The explosions lit up the river with an infernal glare. But the only gainer by the fiasco was Bigot."

Of Randolph's life during that terrible summer but little need be told here. He was now kept better informed of the events of the campaign, and with Alfrede's coming to the château some of his ardor for departure disappeared. Even had it not been so, his illness, which was a sort of slow fever that clung to him with the persistency of the old man of the sea, would have prevented his making any attempt to reach the besieging army. Weeks passed before he was out of danger, and ambition began to rise in his veins once more.

"Thanks to my kind Friends I am better and am once more able to write," he confided on the twenty-fifth of July to a *Journal* he had begun during his imprisonment. "Much has happened in these Weeks. The Lower Town, the Cathedral, and many mansions in the Upper Town, including, alas! the La Vallière Home, have been reduced to Ruins by the relentless Fire of the British Batteries. General Wolfe has employed every Stratagem to draw the Marquis de Montcalm down from his inaccessible Heights; but, as was to be expected in so able a Soldier, the Marquis has resolutely refused to be enticed. My Countrymen have seized the Heights below the River Montmorency, and have made a Reconnaissance in Force up that River, and New England Ranger and British Redcoat have again met Savage and Canadian in the Game of Forest Warfare — all to no Purpose, for Everywhere the few Fords were rendered impassable by French Fortifications. Brigadier Townshend ('t is said) has formed an entrenched Camp on the Heights thus seized and is bombarding the French lines. He is but wasting Time, I fear. Alfrede says that the French are confident. 'No doubt you will demolish the Town,' a French officer who went out under a Flag recently said to the English Commander, 'but you shall never get inside it.' 'I will have Quebec if I stay till the end of November,' was Wolfe's spirited Answer. Knowing the City as I do, I am convinced that it will never be taken from below. The Attack should be made from above. What I hope may be intended as a Beginning in this Direction has been made. Some Vessels have run up the River in the Night past the Batteries of the Town, and a Fleet of Boats have been dragged across Point Lévis and launched again. A few Days since a Detachment of Troops, embarked in these Boats, made a descent upon a French Post at Pointe-aux-Trembles, some distance up the River, where after a brisk Skirmish with a Band of Indians, they captured a few Papers, some Stores, and about a hundred non-combatant Refugees, mostly Women, including *la belle aranturière*, Madame Cadet. The Ladies were entertained by Wolfe at Dinner on Board one of the Vessels, and

were then sent to the French Lines under protection of a Flag. Toinette, who has seen some of the Refugees, reports that all were treated with great Kindness and Consideration. For this I am thankful."

"August 1st. — I continue slowly to improve, but am in low Spirits. Yesterday my Countrymen made the most serious Attack they have yet ventured. The Account I have received is confused, but of the unhappy Result there can be no Doubt. It seems that General Wolfe, disappointed in his Hope of enticing his wily Opponent down from the Heights, resolved to make a desperate Effort to storm the French entrenched Camp. The Point selected for the Enterprise was just above the River Montmorency. Here, as I know from a Visit made last Autumn to the Falls, the Heights rise up from an Expanse of Mud Flats exposed at low Tide. Late in the afternoon, when the Tide was out, Troops from Point Lévis and the Isle of Orleans landed from Boats upon these Flats, while a Column from Townshend's Camp forded the Montmorency below the Falls and hastened to join their Comrades. But the first Regiment to land attacked too precipitately, and, though they captured a Redoubt at the Foot of the Heights, were driven back with great Slaughter when they attempted to climb the Slope. A heavy Thunderstorm burst at that Juncture, with the Result that the Slope became so slippery that Wolfe gave over the Attempt and retired. The French are much elated over their Success. Alfred says many Officers think the Campaign as good as ended. Vaudreuil has publicly declared that he has no more Anxiety for Quebec. He will doubtless write a long Letter to France setting forth in great Detail how the Victory was won through HIS skillful Dispositions. I do not begrudge Montcalm his Laurels; but I own it galls me to think of the Rejoicing of such Rascals as Bigot, Vaudreuil, and Reparti. If General Wolfe is the Officer I trust he is, he will not so easily be turned from his Purpose. Never, however, has a So'dier had to attack a stronger Position, or to face a stouter Antagonist. Our continued ill Success causes me to have dark Forebodings."

"August 30th. — Thanks be to God and my kind Nurses, I am almost recovered; but this has been a trying Period. I have not had the Heart to write. The News which reaches my Retreat is scanty, but from what I hear I judge that the military Situation remains much the same. Sir William Johnson has captured Fort Niagara, and Amherst has forced Bourlamaque to evacuate Ticonderoga and Crown Point. But the French hold a strong position at the foot of Lake Champlain, and their armed Vessels control the Lake. I fear that General Wolfe will get no help from Amherst, though the Chevalier de Lévis, with five hundred Men, has been detached from the Army defending Quebec and sent up the St. Lawrence. Baron La Vallière, who, despite his age and ancient wounds, has been in active Service since the Fleet appeared, has gone with him.

"Deserters report that One-tenth of the English Army have been killed or wounded, and that many more have died of Distempers or are in the Hospitals; while the whole Army is depressed by lack of Success. Nor are the French in much better case. Our Fleet controls the River for twenty or thirty Miles above Quebec, thus making the Transportation of Supplies difficult. Alfred says that Bread costs three Francs a Pound; that Hospital Accommodations and Appliances are poor; that Medicine is lacking.

"To crown the English Misfortunes General Wolfe is ill. I doubt not that a Pall of Gloom has settled down upon his Army. What will be the Outcome I know not. Winter will soon come, and the Fleet must sail. The Time for Victory is short. The French wax more confident. What of my Hopes for Peace? Of finding little Barnaby, whose Father must be with Amherst? For my own Escape? The Outlook is gloomy."

"Sept. 10th. — Nothing decisive has been accomplished in a military Way. The English remain before the Town, and General Wolfe is said to be again among his Troops, who receive him joyfully. He seems to be feeling his Way toward another Plan. The Montmorency Camp has been abandoned, and many more Ships have run up the River past the Defenses. I trust that he means to establish himself above the City. If

he does so, the Marquis de Montcalm must either abandon the Place or fight him upon his own Terms, for the English Army will be between Montcalm and his Provisions and betwixt him and the French Army opposing General Amherst. But the Time for Action is short and the Difficulties in the way of a Landing are many. A few more Days must decide the Issue. Already a number of rainy Days have caused the Loss of Precious Time.

"In this great Crisis I must not be idle. For a week I have been well enough to make a Venture, though Lack of Exercise has prevented me from recovering my full Strength. But when I was ready to make the Trial, a Detachment of Militia, which encamped about the Château, rendered the Attempt too hazardous. This Morning they withdrew, and I have set To-night for the Venture. The Prospect for Success is not too bright, but I must not remain here another Winter. Already my Place of Refuge has more than once narrowly escaped Discovery. Besides, Duty calls me."

His preparations for the venture were already made. After finishing the entry in his *Journal*, he wrote a long letter to Alfred, from whom he had kept the secret of his intended attempt. "It grieves me sorely, dearest, to leave you thus, but it will be safer for us all for me to be gone. The Action of my Enemies long since absolved me from my Parole; and, in the Situation which now presents itself, my Place is with the besieging Army. Had it not been for my Illness, I should long ago have made the Venture." Thus ran the letter. With what endearments and protestations of love it closed may best be left to the reader's imagination.

After the letter was written, there still remained a long interval of daylight, but twilight came at last and faded into darkness. Jeanne brought his supper, and he ate it hurriedly. One by one the lights in the cabins of the *habitants* went out. The noises in the château itself ceased. The time had come.

His pistol, freshly charged, had long been in his belt, and everything else in readiness. Leaving the letter upon the little table, he cautiously opened the door and crept softly down the stairs. The outside door was barred, but he managed to open it and stepped outside. It was good to feel the turf under his feet once more, to see the stars shining overhead. A feeling of exhilaration, of confidence, came over him. It would go hard with any one who stood between him and safety.

Moving warily in the shadows, he quitted the château which for so many weeks had been his refuge. Making a long detour through some fields to avoid all habitations, he came out presently on the road to Quebec. Swiftly, but cautiously, he sped toward the city. Once he heard voices ahead, and, hiding in a thicket, watched a patrol composed of a dozen *habitants* pass westward in the direction from which he had come.

"May *le diable* fly away with these English rogues!" exclaimed one of them ruefully, as they drew abreast of his hiding place. "They hang upon us like a cougar upon the back of a deer."

"Bah!" said another more cheerfully. "We will shake them off. Many will never see their homes again. Wait till Monsieur North-Wind comes sweeping down, then you will see them loosen their hold."

The others grunted approval of the last speech, and all were soon out of hearing. Randolph came out of the thicket and hurried on. A long walk brought him near the place where the road descended into the valley of the St. Charles. Believing that this spot was probably guarded, he had already decided that here he would leave the road and strike across country to a little cove known as the Anse-au-Foulon, about two miles above Quebec. He had visited this cove the fall before and felt certain that he would find boats there.

Doubtless the cove would be guarded, but he hoped that in the darkness he would be able to elude the vigilance of the sentinels. Carefully taking his bearings, he plunged into the woods on his right.

It was now nearing midnight. There was no moon, and beneath the trees the darkness was intense. He was obliged to feel his way forward, and more than once he fell over protruding roots or the trunks of fallen trees. Had it not been for his forest training, he would soon have been hopelessly lost. But he managed to keep his direction, though his progress was distressingly slow, both because of the darkness and because in his weakened physical condition his strength was beginning to ebb. He kept doggedly on, however, and presently arrived at the foot of the plateau beyond which lay the Foulon. He climbed the slope, and, reaching the top, hurried across corn-fields, patches of meadow, and through thickets, toward his destination.

Thus far all had gone prosperously, but as he plunged incautiously through a clump of bushes he came suddenly upon the crouching figure of a man. The man carried a gun, but strangely enough made no effort to use it. Randolph had no time to draw his own weapon before the fellow was upon him. The Virginian met his onrush with determination, and they grappled with each other. To Randolph's surprise, his antagonist did not call for assistance, but seemed determined to effect his capture by his own unaided efforts. For some minutes they wrestled in total silence, except for their heavy breathing and the crackling of dead branches beneath them. With liberty and perhaps life as the stake at issue, Randolph rallied his weakened forces and fought vigorously. If he could only come out victorious, all might yet go well. But his assailant was a man of unusual strength and agility, and only by almost superhuman efforts could Randolph foil the attempts made to throw

him. His strength soon began rapidly to fail him, and as a last resort he bethought himself of a trick which as a boy he had often practiced in the old days at Eastover. It was a trick which admitted of but one defense; but this, if known by the man against whom it was attempted, could be used with resistless effect against the aggressor. Slowly Randolph forced his antagonist backward across his thigh and knee. But at the moment when victory seemed assured, his enemy suddenly kicked Randolph's feet from under him, and twisting in his grasp, fell heavily upon him.

Exhausted and half stunned, Randolph lay thus, thinking helplessly of the months of labor lost. Again he was to be a prisoner to his enemies. He had failed.

His conqueror now spoke for the first time. "Lie still, ye varmint," he said menacingly, "while I tie an' gag ye!"

Something in the voice roused a memory in Randolph's benumbed brain.

"Who are you?" he asked weakly.

"Holy mither of Moses!" exclaimed his captor, rising nimbly to his feet. "Who are *ye*?"

Randolph likewise staggered to his feet, and mechanically the two moved out of the shadow where the fight had taken place into a patch of starlight.

And there Captain Randolph, as if in a dream, found himself gazing into the astonished but joyful visage of Lieutenant Barnaby Currin.

CHAPTER XXXI

A RECONNAISSANCE

"IN the name of God, Barnaby, how did you get here?" cried Randolph.

"By the same token I might ask how you come to be trapesin' about in these thickets when most honest folks are abed?" Barnaby retorted grimly. Then he threw his arm around his friend and said somewhat anxiously: "I hope I have n't hurted you none, Charlie dear."

"Not at all, except that you knocked most of the breath out of me. I've been ill, else you would n't have thrown me so easily."

"I don't care to tackle any tougher a customer," chuckled Barnaby. "You were as hard to handle as a catamount, and all the time I was wonderin' why in thunder you did n't holler for help. T was n't till you tried that trick that I knowed I had you."

"But how do you come here?" Randolph repeated.

"I brought dispatches from Gineral Amherst to Gineral Wolfe. Charles, have you any news for me?"

"Very little," said Randolph regretfully, realizing how much his words would blight his friend's hopes. "While I was in Quebec I made many inquiries. But I could learn little except that Le Chat was said to be in the region of the Upper Lakes. Yesterday Mademoiselle de Saint-Pierre heard a rumor that the sachem is now with the savages in Montcalm's army, but it may not be true."

Barnaby gave a great gulp of disappointment. "All the while we was comin' from Amherst," he said, "I was

hopin'. But God's will be done! We had a turrible time on the way, Charles — thirty-four days on the road. We started five strong, but a band of Abenakis waylaid us an' killed one man an' took another. The rest of us got away only by the skin of our teeth. We knowed they'd watch all the usual ways, so we made a long detour to the north-east up the Kennebec an' down the Chaudière through the worst wilderness I ever set foot in. Once we'd have starved if I had n't been lucky enough to shoot a moose. But how did you git away?"

Randolph sat down on a prostrate tree trunk, and in a low voice and in as few words as possible told the story of his adventures in Quebec and of his escape. Then he again insisted upon knowing how Barnaby came to be upon the plateau.

"I'm reconnoiterin'," said the Irishman, after some hesitation. "You see it was this way: When I gave Amherst's letter to Ginaler Wolfe, the gineral said rather stern like that he thought we'd been a long time comin'. I told him the trouble we'd had on the way, an' then he kinder changed his tune and seemed real sorry for what he'd said. He was disappointed in the letter, for he said it did n't do nothin' but confirm the rumors he'd already had of the capture of Niagara, Old Ti, an' Crown Point. Then he asked me right out in meet'n' when I thought he could expect help from Amherst.

"'Ginaler Wolfe,' says I, 'no doubt you're after wantin' a plain answer without any evasions. I'll give it. Ginaler Amherst's a prime gineral when he gits ready to strike, but the trouble is he's a long time gittin' ready. When we left him at Crown Point, the Frenchers had four armed vessels on the lake, an' our troops was tryin' to build vessels to fight 'em. That takes time — always more than you count on. They was some who said the Frinch vessels

could be took from open boats, an' I know one man who would've helped man the boats; but Amherst said to build ships, so that's what they're doin'. It's my opinion that if Gineral Amherst ever sees Quebec, it'll not be earlier than next summer.'

"Gineral Wolfe looked kinder disappointed at this, though he smiled a little at my way of sayin' that Amherst is slow. I did n't see no more of him again till this mornin', when I was brought aboard the *Sutherland* — that's the ship he has his headquarters on — an' he told me to git into a boat that was lyin' by the vessel's side. When we put off, the boat held, besides myself, the rowers, an' the midshipman at the tiller, six men dressed in the uniforms of grenadiers. But they were n't grenadiers — not by a long jump; they were Colonel Carleton, Captain De Laune, Admiral Holmes, who commands the ships above the town, Brigadiers Monckton an' Townshend, an' Gineral Wolfe himself. We fell down with the current till we were opposite a cove just across yonder called the Foulon. The gineral said niver a word to his officers as to what he was up to, but careless like called their attention to a path that runs up the cliff, but is blocked up with bresh. At the top was about a dozen tents. A little ways above the cove is a battery, an' we did n't dare run in close, but the gineral ordered the sailors to row the boat over to the other side, an' then with me an' the officers climbed to the top, an' took some long looks through a telescope.

"The officers did n't take much interest in what he was doin', an' he still did n't say a word about what he was thinkin' of. When the gineral was n't by, I heard Brigadier Townshend, who's the oldest son of a viscount and never forgets it, say somethin' about bein' led off on a wild-goose chase. 'The gineral's health is bad,' says he; 'his generalship, to my mind, is n't a whit better.' I felt

mad at that, for the plain soldiers do be likin' the gineral wonderful well, in spite of his bad luck, an' I'd took a fancy to him just as I did to my Lord Howe. I wanted to tell the brigadier to shut up, but managed to hold in. By an' by the gineral joined us, an' we was rowed back to the *Sutherland*. There the gineral sent away the officers, but asked me to come into his cabin.

"‘Lieutenant Currin,’ says he, ‘I want to find out whether a regiment could climb that cliff back of the Foulon, an’ whether there’s any troops on top of the plateau besides them we saw in the little camp.’

“‘Let me have a canoe to-night, Gineral, an’ I’ll find out,’ says I, for he looked so pale and friendless like I’d have done anything for him.

“‘Egad!’ says he, an’ I knowed he was pleased, ‘I thought you had the mettle.’

“So he gave me instructions an’ arranged the thing, an’ here I am. My canoe’s hid in a thicket just below the Foulon. I’ll carry you out to our vessels, an’ it shan’t cost you a sixpence.”

“Have you finished your mission?” asked Randolph, upon whose brain was dawning the full significance of his friend’s quest. “‘T is a task that deserves care, for I suspect that much hangs upon the search. The two of us may be able to perform it better than one.”

“I had just begun to examine the plateau when you stumbled over me. We’ll look it all over, an’ then take an obsquint at the camp at the head of the path.”

Randolph eagerly assented, and together they cautiously scoured the plateau. Joy at meeting his friend and exaltation at being able once again to perform a patriotic service gave Randolph the necessary strength. They followed the plateau on the St. Charles side until they were close to the city walls, and then came back on the St. Lawrence

side; but, to their great satisfaction, they found neither troops nor even sentinels.

"The troops at the head of the path are all there are," whispered Barnaby. "Now we'll creep up close an' find out how many there are. Then we'll be after returnin'."

With Barnaby in the lead, they stole toward the camp. Presently they came in sight of the flickering embers of a dying fire that cast a feeble light upon a little group of tents that stood near the brow of the cliff overlooking the St. Lawrence. The camp seemed wrapped in slumber, and the only sentinels were posted along the cliff, too far away to discern the two shadowy forms that crept through the thicket in the rear of the camp to a point not twenty yards from the fire.

From this point of vantage the Virginians counted thirteen tents, which they judged could not contain more than a hundred men. Satisfied that they could learn nothing more, they were about to withdraw when the sentinel at the head of the path challenged, and two other figures came into view along the cliff top. Evidently the answers given were satisfactory, for the newcomers came on almost immediately. Pausing beside the largest tent, one of them called out. An answer came from within, whereupon the two moved on to the fire and stood waiting. Presently a man enveloped in a cloak issued from the tent and approached them. As the night was chill, he picked up some branches from a heap of wood and threw them on the fire. The flames blazed up, and the watchers in the thicket could see the faces of the three distinctly. The man in the great cloak Randolph recognized as Captain Vergor, a member of *La Grande Société*, who four years before, after a tame resistance, had surrendered Fort Beauséjour in Acadie to the English. For this he had been tried, but, thanks to the favor of Vaudreuil and Bigot, had been ac-

quitted. But to Vergor neither of the watchers gave much heed. For the newcomers were none other than Reparti and Le Chat.

"*Parbleu!* what brings you here at such a time of night?" demanded Vergor in French.

"We have been on an errand to Bougainville's forces up the river," Reparti replied. "Vaudreuil fears an attack in that quarter and sent me on a tour of inspection."

"Was all well?"

"Everything. *Les Anglais* may as well take ship for home. Quebec is safe for this year."

"So think I," said Vergor. "What was the rumor about more troops being sent to assist me?"

Reparti chuckled as if at a pleasant remembrance. "*Eh bien*, the Marquis de Montcalm has a foolish fear that the enemy may try to climb these cliffs. Bah! an old woman could beat them back with a broomstick! So he ordered the battalion of Guienne to march hither. Vaudreuil, as you know, does not love the general. He countermanded the order."

"He did well," said Vergor. "I need no assistance. I had a hundred men, but I let those from Bonaventure go home to care for their harvests. I have now but thirty, but it is enough."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Reparti, "you too have a farm in Bonaventure, is it not so?"

"Yes," admitted Vergor shamelessly. "They are to gather my crops also. It was on those terms that I let them go."

"You are a man after Bigot's heart!" exclaimed Reparti. "*Mais, mon Dieu*, let us reap while we may!"

"We had better go now," whispered Randolph. "In leaving they might stumble upon us."

Barnaby did not reply, but raised his rifle and aimed it

at the bronze bosom of the Ottawa. For an instant Randolph did not realize what his comrade was about. Then with a quick movement, he laid his hand over the firing-pan of the weapon.

"No! no!" he whispered, "you must come!"

Reluctantly Barnaby lowered his rifle and obeyed. Together they crept noiselessly away from the fire, and presently came out upon the edge of the cliff two or three hundred yards below the camp. Beneath them, wrapped in fog, lay the St. Lawrence. In places the cliff was very precipitous, but just in front of them projected a sloping spur, thickly covered with trees and bushes. Down this they began to creep. Dark as it was, they made the descent with ease; but, in spite of all his care, Randolph dislodged a stone which, as it plunged downward, made a distressingly loud noise. But a little brook, swollen by autumn rains, fell splashing over a rock near by, and this, they hoped, would deaden the sound. Presently they found themselves at the foot of the cliff upon a narrow beach. Barnaby led the way to a thicket, whence he dragged a birch canoe, which they carried across the beach to the river.

Before embarking, Randolph gazed back at the spur down which they had come.

"With no one at the top to oppose them, troops can climb that safely," he said confidently. "Don't you think so?"

But Barnaby did not answer the question. Instead he shook his fist wildly in the direction of the camp.

"Charles," he demanded fiercely, "why did n't you let me kill the devil?"

"Old friend," said Randolph, laying his hand soothingly on the other's shoulder, "do you think I was not as eager for a shot as you? But when the fate of a Continent hangs in the balance, Revenge must wait!"

CHAPTER XXXII

JAMES WOLFE

AFTER they had embarked in the canoe, Barnaby paddled out into the middle of the river and then turned the bow upstream.

"T is a strange world we live in, Charles," he said, in a low voice, as he plied his paddle against the current. "You an' I have seen strange sights an' suffered some trials since we went with Major Washington to Fort Le Bœuf. An' yet it seems kinder natural that we should be here together. I wonder often how it'll all end. Sometimes I feel as if I could scarcely wait."

"In prison, Barnaby," said Randolph, "I gave up hope — but not for long. I resolved that everything must turn out well for both of us. Somehow I still feel that it will."

"Please God it may!" said Barnaby, in a half-choked voice.

For some time he paddled steadily onward between the two black blurs that hemmed the river in. Presently they came in sight of the indistinct outlines of a vessel swinging at anchor in mid-stream.

"T is the sloop-of-war *Hunter*," said Barnaby. "'T was from her I started on the scout."

"Ahoy there!" boomed forth the voice of a son of Neptune. "What boat is that?"

Barnaby gave a countersign and paddled alongside. A rope ladder was lowered to them, and soon they stood upon the deck. Barnaby explained who Randolph was;

and a petty officer then led the way to a cabin, where the Virginians turned in and were allowed to sleep undisturbed. Soon after daybreak they were astir again, and by request joined the ship's officers at breakfast. There Randolph was introduced to Captain Smith, a bluff man with the brine of the sea in his talk, to the officers under him, and to Captain John Knox of the army, a courteous, well-read gentleman, whose *Journal* was to give later generations much of their knowledge of the campaign. In reply to interested queries, Randolph told the manner of his escape, suppressing, however, many of the details, for he feared that the story might leak through to the French lines and bring trouble upon the heads of his benefactors.

"Your health, Captain Randolph!" cried Captain Smith, when the story was finished. "Why, damn my eyes, if ever I heard of such a tale!"

When the toast had been drunk, Randolph asked some questions in his turn. "I have often wondered," he said, "whether you had serious trouble in coming up the river. Last winter the French boasted that no English fleet would ever be able to get up."

"Damme, 't was not difficult!" declared Captain Smith. "When Admiral Durell drew abreast of Bic with the advance squadron, he enticed French pilots aboard; but they were little help. We could've got up without one of 'em. To be sure, there's a variation of twenty degrees between Louisburg and Quebec and some rather ticklish cross currents besides a few ledges and shoals. But we kept sounding boats always ahead and lookout men aloft to watch the color of the water, and we came through handsomely."

"Tut, tut, Captain Smith!" said Captain Knox chidingly. "You make mountains into mole-hills. As a soldier, I have the right to say that the feat was a far greater one than has so modestly been described. The French pilots

were vastly astonished at the skill of our seamen. When we neared the Traverses, which is the worst place, the pilot on the transport I was on, gasconaded at a great rate. He declared the place would be the grave of the fleet, and that what vessels escaped would have a dismal tale to tell in England. He added that he expected that the walls of Quebec would soon be decorated with our scalps.

"‘Damn your eyes, you porpuss-faced swab, you ought to be tucked up to a yard’s arm for such lies!’ roared old Killick, the master. ‘Damn my blood, I’ll take the vessel through myself!’ He would n’t let the pilot so much as say a word, but fixed the mate at the wheel, and then went to the fo’c’sle with his trumpet. The Frenchman swore we would be lost, for no ship ever presumed to attempt to pass through without a pilot. ‘Ay, ay, my dear frog-eater,’ growled Killick, ‘but I’ll convince you that an Englishman can go where a Frenchman dare not show his nose.’ By watching the ripple and color of the water, hang me, if he did n’t bring us through without so much as touching a sandbank. The pilot then said that surely Killick had been up the river before. When he was told ‘No,’ he lifted hands and eyes to heaven and crossed himself the way these popish rascals have of doing, when they see something they believe is uncanny.

“This, however, was but the beginning of the notable and important services that have been rendered by Admiral Saunders and his skillful men,” continued Knox. “Twice the French have endeavored to burn the fleet, but each time our Jack-tars have foiled their efforts. The last time the enemy sent down a most formidable fire-craft, which consisted of a parcel of schooners, shallops, and stages chained together. It could not have been less than a hundred fathoms in length, and was covered with grenades, old swivels, gun and pistol barrels loaded up to their

muzzles, and various other devilish inventions and combustible matters. But this attempt, like the previous one, happily miscarried, for our gallant seamen, with their usual expertness, went out in small boats, grappled the raft before it got down above a third part of the Basin, towed it safe ashore, and left it at anchor to burn and sputter and explode as it would. As they were returning to their vessels I heard one sailor ask his mate: 'Damme, Jack, didst ever take hell in tow before?'"

"Ay, ay," growled Captain Smith pessimistically, "we have all done our duty this venture, but we have been unfortunate. 'British colors on every French fort, post, and garrison in America,' was the toast we drunk as we sailed out of the harbor of Louisburg; but damn my eyes, we'll have to bestir ourselves if we're to see any of it come true. This fleet can't stay in the river forever with winter coming on."

"A few days sometimes work wonders," said Randolph hopefully. "Gentlemen, let us drink to that toast now!"

And they did it, standing, though it was evident to the Virginians that the others did so with little confidence.

Half an hour later Barnaby and Randolph bade good-by to their new-found friends and entered a boat which was to carry them to the ship *Sutherland*, where Barnaby was to make his report. It was a dismal, rainy morning; but, between the gusts of rain, Randolph could see two or three miles down the river the promontory of Quebec, which he had first beheld twelve months before, and just opposite it Point Lévis, above which clouds of white cannon smoke were rising from the English batteries. Closer at hand, an indentation in the cliff wall on the northern shore marked the Foulon, while on the southern shore and somewhat above, at the mouth of the little river Etchemin, appeared the white tents of a force of English. From

time to time the boat passed warships and transports, all alive with bluejackets and redcoats.

In the contemplation of these scenes Randolph was suddenly interrupted by an exclamation from Currin. "It's losin' my memory I must be," said the Irishman self-accusingly. "I have n't once before remimbered that I have a letter for you, Charles."

"A letter? from whom?"

"From Colonel Washington. I got it 'way back in June. He was expectin' us to reach Quebec, and wrote me he thought mebbe I'd get a chanst to deliver it to you. He's went an' got married."

He fumbled in the fold of his hunting-shirt, and presently produced the letter and handed it to Randolph. Randolph eagerly broke the seal and read:

"MOUNT VERNON, VIRGINIA, 27 April, 1759.

"DEAR CHARLES,— I heard with great Concern of your mishap at Ticonderoga, and was much rejoiced when the welcome news came that you were only slightly wounded, had recovered, and had been sent to Quebec on Parole. I venture to believe that *you* will find *your* Stay in that City less intolerable than would some Others.

"As you have doubtless heard long ere this, we have at last, after many Disappointments, managed to master Fort Duquesne and scatter the hellish Bands who have so cruelly Harried our Borders. For a Time, owing to the Difficulties attendant upon completing a new Road, it appeared as if we would not be able to strike a Blow. When we reached Loyal Hanna within fifty Miles of the Fort, a Council of War determined that it would be inadvisable to attempt to advance further; but at this critical Juncture we learned from three Prisoners who providentially fell into our Hands that the Enemy was very weak, so we marched without Tents or Baggage, and with only a light Train of Artillery. After letting us get within a Day's March, the Enemy burned the Fort and

ran away by the Light of it. We took Possession and rechristened the Place Pittsborough, in Honour of the Great Minister who is doing so much for the Glory of Britain. General Forbes, who was frightfully ill during most of the Campaign but persevered in spite of his Suffering, died soon after he returned to Philadelphia.

"My own Health having long been indifferent, the Enemy being at last driven from our Border, and I having been elected to the Burgesses, I concluded to retire from the Service, and did so on reaching Home. On the sixth of January I had the Happiness to be married to Mrs. Martha Custis, with whom you are acquainted. She unites with me in sending warm Regards; and we hope that when you return to Virginia, you will often honor us by your Presence at Mount Vernon.

"I am sending this in care of Lieutenant Currin in the Hope that his General will be active enough to enable him to deliver it. 'The English flag flying above Quebec' is a Toast that is frequently drunk of late. I trust that the Objects that led you and Lieutenant Currin to join the Northern Army will be soon and happily realized. Permit me to close by saying that if yet another Plantation in the County of Fairfax were to have a new Mistress this year, it would be very pleasing to

"Your warm Friend and obedient Servant,
"GEORGE WASHINGTON."

By the time Randolph had finished the letter, the boat had drawn near a ship-of-the-line with two tiers of black-muzzled guns frowning from her oaken sides and the flag of a rear-admiral of the blue flying at her masthead. Soon the Virginians were on board. The rain had not yet ceased; and a gusty northeast wind, rushing up between the cliffs that walled the river in, whistled lugubriously through the rigging and dashed the rain through the port-holes. A petty officer at once conducted them to a cabin and knocked on the door. A voice bade them enter; and, with Barnaby leading, the Virginians stepped inside.

Randolph found himself in the presence of a young officer of perhaps thirty-two, who had just risen from a table upon which lay scattered a number of maps and papers. His hair was red; his complexion sandy; his eyes blue; his nose slightly upturned; and his forehead and chin somewhat receding. A bit of black ribbon secured his hair in a queue behind; and a scarlet coat, broad of cuffs and flowing in skirt, covered his slender body, narrow shoulders, and long thin limbs. On his left arm was a band of black crape; and about his body, in bandolier fashion, was tied the silken scarf then worn by officers for use in carrying them, when wounded, from the field. His look was that of one on whom some chronic illness had laid its insidious hand; but from his eyes shone a vigorous and enterprising soul — too strong for the frail tenement it tenanted.

When they first entered, it was evident from the droop of his shoulders and the cloud on his face that his mood was in accord with the weather outside; but when his eyes fell upon Barnaby, he seemed to brighten, and cried:

"Egad! Lieutenant Currin, I'm glad to see you back safely. After you were gone I almost reproached myself for having sent you on such a dangerous mission. But who is this you have with you?"

"T is a prisoner I took by the way," said Barnaby, without blinking an eyelid.

"Indeed! But though he has on some sort of French cloak, I see that underneath he wears the uniform of a captain of our own provincial forces."

"Faith, Gineral Wolfe, there's no misleadin' you," replied Barnaby. "You're right in thinkin' he's no Frencher. To be plain, he's Captain Charles Randolph of the Sixtieth Regiment of Royal Americans, and my

immediate superior officer. And yet I told the truth. I took him prisoner."

"Well, well, that is droll. But explain the riddle."

Barnaby described the meeting on the plateau, the conflict, and the sudden recognition, not neglecting in skillful asides to mention some of Randolph's services during the war.

"Wonderful! perfectly wonderful!" exclaimed the young commander in astonishment. "Why, 't is like a page from *Plutarch* or the *Aeneid*. Captain Randolph, I heartily congratulate you upon your escape and am happy to meet you. I have heard your name before. Some weeks ago, through a mistake, we captured a number of high-born French ladies, whom as soon as we conveniently could we sent back under a flag to their relatives and friends. At a dinner given in their honor a number of them spoke of you and seemed very eager to learn whether you had escaped to my army."

"I have lain hidden near Quebec," said Randolph. "I did not attempt to go down the St. Lawrence as they supposed. Only a long illness has prevented my joining you sooner. But I am happy that I am here at last, and I hope that I shall be allowed to take part in the final blow for the capture of the city."

"Gad's life!" cried Wolfe delightedly, "that is the proper spirit. I like it, I do indeed! I shall surely see that you have work to do. Having been so lately a prisoner you would be excusable if you were somewhat chary about making another venture so soon."

"General Wolfe," said Randolph earnestly, "Lieutenant Currin and I saw this war begin. We were with Washington when he took Jumonville's party. If you were to search the colonies through, you could not find two men more anxious for the capture of Quebec."

"Amen to that!" said Barnaby.

"Captain Randolph," replied Wolfe, "I had something of your story from the ladies. I know also the wrongs suffered by Lieutenant Currin. What you say is true, and in a manner I am not sorry it is so, for I see that I can trust you both. Lieutenant Currin, what have you to report?"

"Gineral Wolfe," said Barnaby, "Captain Randolph an' me scoured the plateau well-nigh to the walls of the city, *an' there is but the one post.*"

"And the cliff?" demanded the general, with kindling look.

"It can be climbed. Leastways I think so. But here is Captain Randolph, who knows more of regular operations than I. Ask him."

Wolfe turned questioning eyes upon Randolph.

"My friend is much too modest," said Randolph. "I have been with him since the beginning of the war, and I have never known his judgment in a matter of this sort to be in error in the slightest particular. I heartily concur in his belief that a regiment or an *army* can scale the cliff with ease. The undertaking is far less formidable than it looks. Only the presence of a considerable force at the top could defeat the attempt. As to the likelihood of there being such a force, I can add one important detail which Lieutenant Currin, owing to his inability to understand French, did not discover."

He then related in some detail the interview which the two had witnessed between Vergor and Reparti regarding the number of Vergor's troops and Vaudreuil's countermanding Montcalm's order for a battalion to encamp upon the plateau.

As the Virginians told their story, a look of enterprise came into the young commander's pale face, yet with it was still mingled something of indecision.

"Gentlemen," he said, after a pause, "I find myself in a somewhat peculiar situation. I see from your talk that you have penetrated what I may as well admit was a tentative plan. Under the circumstances it will probably be safer for me to take you into my confidence fully. And yet not one of my brigadiers nor other officers dream that I contemplate such a stroke as you see I do. They are older than I and have lost confidence in my abilities. Besides, they are so wedded to conventional warfare that to them such a plan would seem that of a madman."

He paused, and for a minute or two sat bowed forward wrapt in thought. Then in a measured voice he continued:

"As you may have guessed, it was not the expectation of the government that this army unaided should capture Quebec. We were to keep the enemy employed while Amherst should march northward and effect a junction with us. But Amherst, as Lieutenant Currin reports, can hardly arrive this year. The result is two alternatives: either to give up in despair and thereby bring disgrace upon English arms and discouragement to our brave ally, the king of Prussia, or alone to make a final desperate attempt to carry a position far stronger than even we had dreamed. Ten days ago I decided that operations below the town were hopeless, and transferred much of the army above it, though endeavoring to mislead the enemy as to my intentions. I hoped to make a landing at Deschambault or Pointe-aux-Trembles, but these heavy rains have detained us and have enabled the French to prepare. Our time is short. We must either strike or go. Yesterday I thought of the little cove and the path up the cliff. Captain Randolph, can you see merit in the plan?"

It was a critical moment. Randolph saw that upon the general's decision hung the fate of the campaign, perhaps of the war.

"In my estimation," he said earnestly, "the plan you suggest is the only one by which the city can be taken. As an earnest of my conviction, I ask that Lieutenant Currin and I be allowed to guide the troops who make the first attempt. The French are so accustomed to our armies doing everything by rule that they will never dream of so bold a stroke. If we gain the plateau, we shall disarrange their plans, command their communications, and force them to give us battle on equal terms. A victory will determine the fate of Quebec and of Canada, for the defenses on that side of the city are weak and cannot resist our artillery."

"Lieutenant Currin," said the general, turning to the borderer, "I want your opinion also."

"'T is the plan an Injun or a Buckskin would try," said Barnaby eagerly. "'T is the best plan an English ginaler has thought out this war. Try it, Ginaler Wolfe, an' in five days we 'll be in Quebec. An' count me in on leadin' up the cliff."

A glance at the commander's face was sufficient to show that he was much impressed. Nor was this strange. A plan that he had evolved had been commended by two men who, though neither old nor high in rank, had seen much of war, and possessed souls as ardent as his own.

"Almost," he said slowly, as if to himself, "I am persuaded to make the venture. Shall I? The plan has many merits. The troops are already properly disposed, and by a feint Bougainville can be tolled up the river.

"But, great God," he cried, springing to his feet, with a wild light in his haggard face, "it will be hazardous! If I attempt it and fail, I shall be set down as the most foolhardy officer who ever commanded a British army. I know my officers would not approve of it, and my only purpose in taking them with me yesterday was that they might know the ground should I decide to make the trial. Yet,

dangerous as is the plan, I can think of none more promising. If I go back empty-handed, I shall be a ruined man. Mad, the envious said I was, when older men were passed over and I was sent out, and they will repeat it jeeringly when I come back discredited. Worse still, another failure will be added to the long list already made by Englishmen in this war. The night before I left London I swore to our great minister that Quebec should be ours. I will not go back like other unfortunate generals to be exposed to the censures and reproaches of an ignorant populace. 'T is true that Amherst has not given us the help we were promised; 't is true that my wretched health might serve as some excuse; but how can I go back to William Pitt and say: 'I have failed'?

"No! no! we must take the city. This plan offers our only hope, and we will try it. Gentlemen, you shall have the honor for which you ask and in addition shall serve upon my staff on the day of battle. Come weal or woe, we will make the venture. Britannia's banner shall fly above the citadel, or be trampled in the dust!"¹

¹ In the previous spring Robert Stobo, who has already been mentioned in this story, had broken his parole and escaped from Quebec, and later joined Wolfe's army. In his curious but very inexact *Memoirs*, the claim is made that it was he who pointed out to Wolfe the spot where the ascent was made of the Heights of Abraham. This claim has been accepted by some writers, and the story has been elaborated until Stobo is made to lead the army up the cliff and play a part in the battle. This erroneous idea has been spread broadcast in a number of romances, in which, under one name or another, Stobo figures as the hero. It is barely possible that Stobo may have pointed out the Foulon to Wolfe; but, as a matter of history, he left Wolfe's army six days before the battle of the Plains and three days before Wolfe made his reconnaissance of the landing place. See Stobo's *Memoirs* and a letter of General Amherst in Doughty's *The Siege of Quebec*, vol. VI, p. 44. In his admirable book, *The Fight for Canada*, Lieutenant-Colonel Wood characterizes Stobo as "a disgrace to the Service for breaking his parole."

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE PATHS OF GLORY

IT was evening of the day following. Eight bells were striking on board the *Sutherland* when a lithe young man of twenty-four, in the uniform of a naval lieutenant, climbed the ship's side and entered the cabin. "Jacky" Jervis he was called by his fellows then, but for the deeds he afterwards performed he lives in history as one of England's greatest admirals, the Earl of St. Vincent.

"Egad, Jacky," exclaimed Wolfe affectionately, springing up and grasping the lieutenant's hand, "I'm glad to see you."

"I was told that you had sent for me," said Jervis tentatively.

"Yes, Jacky, I have a commission I want some one to undertake, and I know of no one but my old schoolmate at Swindon's to whom I wish to intrust it."

"Whatever it may be, I am yours to command."

"Tis somewhat somber in its nature," said Wolfe soberly. "To-night we go on a desperate undertaking. In case I should fall, I want you to see that these papers come into the proper hands. One is my will; the others are notes to my relatives and friends."

He handed the papers to the lieutenant; then, after a moment's hesitation, he opened his coat and shirt and took from next his heart a little square packet, which he proceeded to open, disclosing to view the dainty miniature of a girl with luxuriant wavy hair, sweet aristocratic face, and a full round throat, about which a dark ribbon of velvet was tied in a graceful bow.

" 'T is Miss Lowther," said Wolfe, with feeling. " She is to wed with me if I return. If I do not, my will provides that the picture is to be set in jewels to the amount of five hundred guineas and returned to her. I want you to be my messenger. 'T would be sad to lose her, for she is sweet and good and fair, yet somehow I feel that she is not for me."

So serious was the young commander that Jervis did not attempt to make light of his forebodings as figments of the imagination. He merely said: "If you would wear an old uniform instead of this splendid new one you have on, which is certain to catch the attention of the enemy's sharpshooters, I should think your chances for surviving were infinitely better."

" 'T is not that I wish to appear conspicuous, Jacky," said Wolfe. " But I feel that it will encourage the men. God knows they have had enough to shake their faith in me."

" But they are loyal still, God bless them!" said Jervis, with feeling. " They would undertake to storm Hades, with you to lead them."

All was by this time ready for the execution of the great and hazardous plan. About nightfall vessels had been sent up the river as if for an attack on Pointe-aux-Trembles, the object being to toll the French troops under Bougainville away from the vicinity of the spot appointed. The siege guns on Point Lévis were working as usual, and below the city Admiral Saunders was bombarding the Beauport lines and maneuvering flotillas of boats as if for a landing. On board the *Sutherland* and the vessels lying near her were thirty-six hundred men, and at Goreham's Post, at the mouth of the Etchemin, lay twelve hundred more in readiness to be ferried across the river if the first detachment succeeded in effecting a landing.

Time dragged slowly, as it always does on the eve of great undertakings. But about eleven o'clock seventeen

hundred men were quietly embarked in some large bateaux and other boats lying alongside the squadron. One bateaux next the *Sutherland* must most engage our attention, for in it sat Wolfe and his staff (including now both Randolph and Currin), Captain Chads, the naval officer to whom the management of the landing had been intrusted, and Captain De Laune and twenty-four volunteers who were to undertake the desperate task of climbing the cliff and surprising the guard at the top.

Presently a single lantern appeared in the main topmast shrouds of the *Sutherland*.

"T is the signal for the other boats to draw abreast of us," whispered Randolph to Barnaby.

Through the gloom came the soft splash of oars, and soon the whole flotilla had reached the rendezvous between the *Sutherland* and the south shore.

"What think you, Captain Chads," asked Wolfe, when this movement had been executed; "has the tide begun to ebb?"

"Not yet, but we shall not have long to wait," was the answer.

Half an hour passed; then Chads said to a petty officer who stood waiting at the rail: "You may raise the other, Williams."

The order was at once obeyed, and a second lantern appeared above the first.

"Give way," said Chads to the oarsmen; and the boat carrying Wolfe and the forlorn hope began to drop downstream, followed by the others. Across the river at Cap Rouge the French sentinels remained blissfully unaware that the final expedition against the citadel of New France was under way.

Up to midnight the stars had shone clearly, but now the sky was mercifully overcast, and a favoring southwest

breeze had sprung up. On either side, as the flotilla dropped quietly down with the ebbing tide, appeared dimly the precipitous cliffs that hemmed the river in. From far to the eastward came the roar of the batteries on Point Lévis and of Saunders' guns as he bombarded the Beauport lines from vessels lying in the Basin of Quebec, and now and again a shell trailed like some huge meteor across the heavens toward the city.

For a time all in the foremost boat sat silent, each man communing with his own thoughts. All felt the strain; all wondered what the next few hours would bring forth. Presently the melancholy ideas that oppressed him proved too much for Wolfe to endure in silence.

"Gentlemen," he said, in a deep subdued voice, "the situation we are in is so novel that one can, I suppose, be pardoned for having strange thoughts. For the last hour there has been running through my mind some lines contained in a poem recently published in a little book given me by a dear friend just before I left London. I wonder if you know it? 'T is entitled an *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*; its author is one Thomas Gray."

Verse by verse he recited. The sound of the gently dipping oars and the soft ripple of the current mingled with his mellow voice but did not drown it. All listened as does an audience at some great opera, when the perfect voice of the singer expresses the supremest emotion in the gamut of passion or of suffering. And there was not one but remembered to his dying day how the young commander's feelings mastered him and how his voice broke as he quoted the immortal stanza:

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike th' inevitable hour:
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.'"

He made no attempt to recite more. "Gentlemen," he said, after a pause, "I would rather have written those lines than take Quebec to-morrow."

Out of the blackness ahead loomed the dark outlines of a vessel lying in the center of the stream.

"'T is the sloop *Hunter*," said Captain Chads, when the foremost boat was within half a cable's length. "Great God! what are the crew doing?"

"I believe they take us for the enemy," Wolfe exclaimed, in great alarm. "See, they are running to quarters and seem to be training guns on us. If they fire, our enterprise is ruined."

"What boats are those?" demanded a hoarse voice from the *Hunter*.

"British; for God's sake, don't fire!" cried Chads.
"Stand off till I make sure," came the stern order.
"What is the countersign?"

"Victory," said Chads quickly.
"Come nearer," said the speaker, evidently still unconvinced.

Willingly enough, Wolfe's boat drew alongside. "We are friends, Captain Smith," called the commander. "I am General Wolfe. We are on a secret expedition."

"Gad!" exclaimed the captain. "You had a close call! I came near giving you a broadside without troubling to challenge you. I took you for a provision convoy that a couple of deserters say the French are expecting down the river to-night."

After the boats left the *Hunter*, it became necessary for them to steer in toward the north shore in order not to be swept past their destination.

"*Qui vive!*!" sharp and menacing came a challenge from the darkness at the foot of the cliff.

It was a breathless moment. Discovery spelt failure. But there was in the nearest boat a quick-witted Highland officer who, having served on the Continent, knew French perfectly. He had also heard the colloquy with the captain of the *Hunter*.

"*France!*" he responded without hesitation.

"*A quel régiment!*" demanded the voice.

"*De la Reine,*" replied the Highlander, in subdued tones.

Probably the sentinel did not hear the answer, for he said: "Why do you not speak louder?"

"Keep quiet, comrade," said the Highlander, still in French. "These are the provision boats. I fear we shall be heard."

Satisfied with this plausible answer, the sentinel said no more. Vastly relieved, the English passed on. Randolph and Currin directed the midshipman at the tiller where to steer, and in a few minutes Wolfe's boat grated upon the narrow beach. The general himself was the first man to spring ashore, closely followed by Randolph, Currin, and Captain De Laune, and the twenty-four volunteers. Three light infantry companies under Colonel Howe, brother of him who had fallen at Ticonderoga, were landed to support the attempt.

The critical moment had now come. Above towered the bold cliff which must be scaled and mastered. In many hearts were doubts and misgivings, but two lithe figures stepped to the head of the volunteers and led the way toward the rocky spur up which the attempt was to be made. Who were these figures? Who should they be but those two comrades whom we have followed in hazardous marches along the Rivière aux Bœufs, beside the swift Monongahela, and down this very cliff that frowns so blackly before us? Creeping through the thicket that skirted it, the party arrived at the foot of the spur.

"Take your time, men," said Randolph, in a low voice. "Keep cool and avoid loose stones. We shall reach the top with ease."

With muskets slung at their backs, the volunteers followed the two Virginians. Roots, bushes, and the trunks of trees furnished welcome assistance. Now and again some dislodged rock went tumbling down the cliff, but the splash of the falls of the little brook Saint Denis mercifully deadened the noise. In five minutes Randolph, Currin, and Captain De Laune were on the summit. The men were following close behind them.

From along the cliff came again the challenge:

"Qui vive!"

"France," said Randolph, anxious to gain even a minute's delay. Barnaby dropped back into the shadow.

"Le mot d'ordre?"

"La victoire," replied Randolph, mumbling the words so that they were unintelligible. "I command a relieving party, *mon enfant*. You may call off the other guards. We will care for *les Anglais* if any come."

Fortunately the sentinel was a slow-witted *habitant*, unaccustomed to the usages of war. Though still suspicious, he waited until other dark forms began to appear over the brow of the cliff, and one man, unaware of the sentinel's proximity, uttered an incautious British oath.

Instantly the sentinel raised his fusil. But before he could fire there leaped out from behind a neighboring tree an agile form. The sentinel went to earth with his throat clutched in the iron grasp of Barnaby Currin. In a minute the astonished man was bound and gagged.

In the time thus gained all the volunteers and part of the light infantry had reached the summit. Then from further up the cliff arose the wild shout:

"*Les Anglais! aux armes! aux armes! les Anglais!*"

Two or three shots rang out. The volunteers and Howe's infantry sprang toward the white tents that were becoming faintly visible in the increasing morning light. There were confused cries, a volley of shots, a glimpse of scurrying, half-dressed forms; and the camp was taken. To the anxious army below went down a hearty British cheer.

Soon the men came swarming up the cliff. The path was cleared. The remaining troops on the ships — which had dropped down the river with the tide — and the detachment from Goreham's Post were landed and likewise climbed the cliff. The Samos battery above the cove bellowed harshly for a time, but was stormed by Howe and his light infantry. By a little after sunrise the British army was drawn up in order of battle on the Heights of Abraham.

At last Fortune had smiled!

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE FATE OF A CONTINENT

R ESPLENDENT in his new uniform and attended by his staff, including Randolph and Barnaby, General Wolfe was moving down his line of battle.

"Our chance has come," he said exultantly to the commander of each regiment he passed, "at last we are where they must fight us! Let every man do his duty, and this will be a glorious day for England. Double-shot your muskets. But do not fire until the enemy are within forty paces. After the first volley, reload, advance twenty paces, fire again, then charge!"

The men caught his spirit. Despite discouraging failures, they had never yet lost faith in their ardent young leader. Presently a company of the Forty-seventh struck up to the tune of *Lilies of France* a song which had been much heard during the early days of the campaign, but which had fallen into disuse since the disastrous repulse at the heights of the Montmorency, where its composer, Sergeant Ned Botwood, had fallen. Soon the whole battle line was singing:

"Come, each death-doing dog who dares venture his neck,
Come, follow the hero who goes to Quebec;
Jump aboard of the transports, and loose every sail,
Pay your debts at the tavern by giving leg-bail;
And ye that love fighting shall soon have enough:
Wolfe commands us, my boys, we shall give them Hot Stuff!"

"Up the River St. Lawrence our troops shall advance,
To the Grenadiers' March we will teach them to dance.
Cape Breton we've taken, and next we will try
At their capital to give them another black eye.
Vaudreuil, 't is in vain you pretend to look gruff, —
Those are coming who know how to give you Hot Stuff!"

"With powder in his periwig, and snuff in his nose,
Monsieur will run down our descent to oppose;
And the Indians will come: but the light infantry
Will soon oblige *them* to betake to a tree.
From such rascals as these may we fear a rebuff?
Advance, grenadiers, and let fly your Hot Stuff!"

"When the Forty-seventh regiment is dashing ashore,
While bullets are whistling and cannons do roar,
Says Montcalm: 'Those are Shirley's, — I know the lapels.'
'You lie,' says Ned Botwood, 'we belong to Lascelles'!
Tho' our clothing is changed, yet we scorn a powder-puff;
So at you, ye b——s, here's give you Hot Stuff!"'

While the refrain still rose along the line the ridge ahead began to be thronged with white uniforms. Randolph looked attentively at the standard fluttering over them, and saw that, in the language of heraldry, it was quarterly first and fourth *feuille-morte*, second and third *vert*; over all a white cross.

"Those troops belong to the battalion of Guienne. I recognize the standard," he said to Wolfe.

"Let them come," said the commander gayly. "I am happy to see them."

The white-coated gentry extended themselves along the ridge, but otherwise made no hostile demonstration. Swarms of Indians and Canadians soon made their appearance, however, and, creeping along under cover of the woods and thickets, opened a galling fusillade on the English wings.

At this Barnaby began to grow restive. "If I had my

old rifle here," said he to Randolph, "I would kinder like to mix in that."

"Be patient," said Randolph, laughing, "'t is not often that one can serve on the staff of a major-general. For this once you must fight according to the rules."

Presently the firing of these sharpshooters became so heavy that Wolfe threw out skirmishers to oppose them and ordered the regiments that were most exposed to lie down. Light showers fell at intervals, but the men continued in high spirits, and patiently awaited the event. Meanwhile every eye watched keenly the crest of the half-way ridge. More columns of regulars and of motley clothed militia came in sight and deployed. Artillery began to ply the English lines with grape-shot. At intervals the solitary English six-pounder that had been dragged up the cliff bellowed a defiant reply.

"T is evident they mean to fight!" cried Wolfe delightedly. "We shall not have long to wait."

It was now near ten o'clock. The clouds which hitherto had obscured the sky were passing away and giving place to a flood of warm sunshine that lit up the brilliant uniforms and glittering weapons of the two armies and illumined the gorgeous crimson, yellow, and purple foliage of the woodlands in the stupendous amphitheatre in which one of the great scenes of history was about to be enacted. The plateau on which the armies stood formed the stage. To the British left, gradually rising tier upon tier, lay the northern range of the blue pine-clad Laurentians; while to their right stretched away league upon league of undulating upland sweeping up to the yet more distant southern range, whose wider semicircle curved in to meet its northern counterpart and make the vast mountain ring complete. Across the arena to the right the great river, full-charged with Britannia's might, ebbed and flowed past the Rock

of Quebec — the bulwark of New France and the prize of victory!

As he watched the enemy's lines Randolph saw ride out from them, on a splendid black charger, a cavalier wearing a shining cuirass and the full uniform of a lieutenant-general of the French king. For some minutes the officer surveyed the English position, which was only partly visible because of the rough ground; then he turned and rode slowly down the front of his own line, brandishing his drawn sword, and apparently calling on his men to do their utmost. And from the waiting ranks came thunderous cheers of:

"Montcalm! Montcalm! Vive notre général! Montcalm!"

No Roman emperor ever received such a salute from gladiators about to die. A lump rose in Randolph's throat; he felt strangely troubled. "Should either leader fall," thought he, "I shall be sad, for I love them both!"

Before Montcalm finished his course, the English line, at an order from Wolfe, moved forward a hundred paces in order to commit both armies to close and decisive action. Then, with Randolph and Currin and other aides, the English general moved once more along the front of his line.

"Be firm, my lads," he kept saying to the men. "Do not return a shot till they are within forty yards of your guns. Then you may fire."

And as he passed on huzzas that rivaled the cheers which greeted his great opponent rent the air. Shouldering their muskets, the men stood as if on parade.

The bullets fired by the Canadian and Indian sharpshooters were now flying thicker than ever, and as Wolfe turned to come back from the left, one struck him in the wrist. Wrapping a handkerchief which bore the monogram "K. L." around the wound, he kept on without a word of complaint. From behind bushes and knolls, and from the edge of cornfields, puffs of smoke shot incessantly, for

more than one skilled rifleman had marked the young commander as his prey. Near the middle of the line Randolph and Barnaby saw him stagger; but to their anxious questioning he gave no answer, and, heedless of a bullet in the groin, kept on down the line, pouring out his spirit in the animated exhortations that spring from that deep emotion which none but warriors can feel and none but heroes can utter. At last he took his stand on a little knoll between the Twenty-eighth and the Louisburg Grenadiers, whence he commanded a view of nearly his whole line.

From this point Randolph and Barnaby saw the enemy sweep proudly down from the ridge. The French regulars — victors of Oswego, of William Henry, of Ticonderoga — were in the center; the Canadian regulars and militia were on the wings. As they moved forward, the French shouted loudly and waved their weapons. The English six-pounder, daringly planted in front of the line, plied them with grape, and the bagpipes of the Highlanders sent back a shrill defiance; but the English troops stood in ominous silence, waiting.

"There he is!" cried Barnaby, whose keen eyes had been seeking the approaching array for a hated figure.

"Where?" demanded Randolph, with no less eagerness.

Barnaby silently pointed to a gigantic figure that strode ahead of a battalion of colonial troops, over whom waved a banner which Randolph recognized as that of Montreal.

"Good!" said Randolph grimly. "He is almost opposite us." And he drew his sword.

The French advanced rapidly at first; their onslaught bade fair to be furious. But it was not long before the very silence of their opponents had its effect. The Canadians had not advanced a hundred paces when they began to fire without orders, and then to throw themselves on the ground to reload. These tactics impeded the advance

without causing the British much loss, disorganized the line of battle, and furnished an opportunity for those who were disinclined to come to close quarters to slink off and join in the skirmishing attacks upon the British wings. Randolph and Barnaby saw Reparti and other officers remonstrating with their followers, but so averse were the Canadians to a fight in the open that they melted away like snow beneath a summer sun. The battalions of French regulars kept bravely on, but soon their own ranks broke out in disorderly long-range firing.

Undismayed, the French officers led their men forward, waving their long espontoons and shouting words of encouragement. Fearful for their now exposed flanks, the two battalions on the left inclined to the left, and the three on the right to the right; thus, split in two, the densely massed French line of battle moved forward with less assurance toward the waiting lines of British bayonets. This movement threw the small remnant of Canadians who had gathered round Reparti further to the English right, and brought the battalion of Royal Roussillon opposite the knoll where stood Wolfe and his staff. Rapidly the distance diminished. Randolph could see the battalion colors of blue, red, yellow, and green, with white crosses upon which were embroidered golden fleur-de-lis, and the black three-cornered hats, red and blue collars, and black stocks of the men. The surging ranks broke forth in wild bursts of smoke, and now and again some stricken British soldier sank with clattering gun to earth. But the British discipline was wonderful. Now the French were within a hundred yards, yet not a shot had been fired by that grim battle line. Eighty yards . . . sixty . . . fifty . . . forty-five . . . forty . . .

"Fire!" rang out the voice of Wolfe.

The British muskets rose, and there thundered forth a

volley so perfectly delivered that it sounded like a cannon shot. Again, with the precision of clock-work, the well-drilled men reloaded and moved twenty paces forward. The dense smoke of the first volley had lifted somewhat, disclosing a scene of havoc. Again belched forth a terrible volley. The French went down by hundreds. Their ranks began to crumble.

"Charge!" shouted Wolfe, springing in front of the Louisburg Grenadiers.

The English regiments gave a mighty cheer and dashed in with the bayonet; the Highlanders shouted their fierce slogan and fell to with the claymore. Some brave Frenchmen endeavored to stem the rush, but not many. Most who had not fallen raised the *sauve qui peut!*

"When the Forty-seventh regiment is dashing ashore,
While bullets are whistling and cannons do roar,
Says Montcalm: 'Those are Shirley's, — I know the lapels.'
'You lie,' says Ned Botwood, 'we belong to Lascelles'!
Tho' our clothing is changed, yet we scorn a powder-puff;
So at you, ye b——s, here's give you Hot Stuff!'"

Randolph and Barnaby were dashing madly forward with the grenadiers in the hope of meeting Reparti. But the longed for encounter which a few minutes before had seemed probable had been rendered impossible by the split in the French line. The few Montreal militia who advanced in the final charge were thrust far aside toward the river by the battalion of Royal Roussillon. Before this battalion gave way, the militia fled from the field, bearing Reparti with them. Balked of their hoped for prey, the disappointed Virginians fought in the *mêlée* with whomever opposed them, and came presently upon two British grenadiers thrusting savagely at a young officer who was defending himself with his sword. The combat was too unequal to be long maintained. One of the grenadiers ran his bayonet

through the officer's left arm; the other was about to give a finishing thrust, when Randolph caught the musket.

"Yield, Lieutenant Lusignan, for the sake of those who love you!" he cried.

Reluctantly the young officer gave up his weapon. "*Mon Dieu!* I may as well," he said bitterly, "for the day is lost."

It was true. The whole French army was a disorderly mob flying wildly for safety, and from all parts of the field arose the cry "*Miséricorde!*" *In five minutes the fate of a continent had been decided!*

With Barnaby's assistance, Randolph helped Lusignan back from the shambles toward the rear. They had not gone far ere they came upon a little knot of men gathered round a prostrate form lying upon the coat of a grenadier.

"Who is it?" asked Randolph, but even as he uttered the words he saw the officer's face — and it was the face of him who but a few hours before had said: "The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

"He was struck just as the charge began," said Captain Curry of the Twenty-eighth. "The wound is mortal."

A surgeon was doing what he could, but the young general's head was sunk forward on his breast, and in his unseeing eyes was that glassy look that accompanies dissolution.

Suddenly, from a little knoll in front, some one shouted: "See how they run!"

"Who run?" asked Wolfe, rousing himself.

"The French, sir. Egad, they have given way every where!"

"Go, one of you, to Colonel Burton," said the dying man; "tell him to march Webb's regiment down to Charles

River to cut off their retreat from the bridge. Now —
God be praised — I will die in peace!"

A moment more and his soaring spirit took its flight.

At almost the same moment Montcalm, mortally stricken and supported in the saddle by two grenadiers, entered Quebec through the St. Louis gate. "Oh, *Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*" screamed some frightened women, "the marquis is killed!" "It is nothing, it is nothing," he said reassuringly. "Do not grieve for me, *mes bonnes amies.*"

He was taken to a house, where the surgeon who examined his wounds told him that he could not live beyond the morning. "So much the better," said the dying soldier. "I am happy that I shall not see the surrender of Quebec." To his secretary he confided messages to each of his beloved family in far away Candiac, arranged that his papers should be delivered to his friend Lévis, and devoted his last hours to preparing for the death that a little before dawn came to his relief. All was confusion in the city, but an old man called "Bonhomme Michel" contrived to fashion a rude coffin out of a few boards; and when evening fell, a little procession composed of the commandant and officers of the garrison, citizens, and sorrowing women and children followed the coffin in dismal silence through gloomy streets, lined with shattered houses and fallen walls, to the chapel of the Ursulines. There, in the pale light cast by a few torches, the priests murmured the *Libera Me, Domine*, in which the nuns behind the grating joined with trembling voices. Then the body of the greatest general and noblest gentleman who had ever served New France was laid to rest in a grave that had been partly hollowed out by the bursting of a shell. Again had the saying been fulfilled: "*La guerre est le tombeau des Montcalm.*"

Thus, one in victory and the other in defeat, died glori-

ously the two heroes of this great war. Posterity has paid equal honors to both. In the governor's garden at Quebec stands today a shaft of stone fittingly erected as a single great memorial and typical of the feeling with which each is regarded. On one side is the single word "Montcalm"; on the other, "Wolfe"; while on the pedestal is carved:

MORTEM VIRTUS COMMUNEM
FAMAM HISTORIA
MONUMENTUM POSTERITAS
DEDIT

CHAPTER XXXV

SAKI ONCE MORE

DARKNESS had fallen upon the battlefield. The wounded had been cared for; some of the dead were buried. The victors were fortifying the blood-drenched plateau and bringing up reinforcements and artillery from the ships below. On the cliff overlooking the valley of the St. Charles, Randolph and Currin were laboring like common soldiers helping to construct a redoubt. The first elation of victory had passed, and each was silently wondering whether the events of the day would assist in the accomplishment of what he had most at heart. The swift-spreading news of Montcalm's fall had reached them; and, knowing how the stricken general had held Reparti and La Grande Société in check, Randolph dreaded what might happen to Alfrede now that her protector was powerless and dying.

Into the fierce glare of light from the fire that blazed beside the redoubt strode a sergeant and two soldiers leading an Indian squaw.

"Captain Randolph," said the sergeant, "this woman was caught skulking near one of the outposts at the foot of the cliff. She says she was seeking you."

Randolph stepped closer and looked at her curiously. He saw first that she was young and handsome, but that there was a trace of that harshness of expression that comes prematurely to all Indian women.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed, with a start of surprise. "I have seen you before, I think. Are you not the girl who, beside the Rivière aux Bœufs, warned us of the capture of Mademoiselle de Saint-Pierre?"

"Yes," said the squaw, also in French.

"How do you come here?"

She drew a step nearer. "I wished to give you another warning. The White Lily is again in peril."

"How do you know this?" demanded he, paling. "Why do you warn us?"

"Listen," she answered. "Once Captain Reparti loved Sàki, and she bore him a son." Her eyes glowed momentarily with a tender light, then grew hard again. "But he saw the White Lily and tired of his wilderness mate. The Lily cared not for him. He planned to capture her, but you foiled him. Those warriors whom you slew were not Iroquois, but Ottawas dressed as children of the Long House. His failure did not cool his passion, and ever since he has striven to possess her. Two years ago he left Sàki in the region of the Lakes and came to Quebec. Last winter was a hard one in the wigwams, monsieur. Sàki had no warrior to hunt for her. Her son died of starvation."

"What a devil!" cried Randolph fiercely.

"A month ago Sàki started for Quebec, thinking perhaps he had not known what she had suffered — that he would take her back into his wigwam. Four hours ago she saw him. She told him of his son's death. He cared not. When she came close to him, he pushed her from him. He called her '*une peau rouge.*' He said that tonight he would be lord of a woman of his own color. More than that he did not tell her, but from an Ottawa she learned the plan. The Lily is in the château with none to defend her. At midnight he and Le Chat, with a score of the sachem's band, will seize her. Montcalm is dying, and there is none now

whom Reparti has need to fear. At last he can work his will."

Randolph's face had grown ashen. "He shall not!" he cried. "By the eternal God, he shall not! Barnaby, come with me."

Five minutes later the two Virginians stood before Brigadier Townshend, who, owing to the death of Wolfe and the disabling of Monckton by a severe wound, now commanded the English army. To him Randolph told the news Saki had brought, inwardly dreading lest the commander would refuse the request he was about to make. But for once the haughty son of a viscount was graciousness itself.

"Captain Randolph," he said, "the whole army is under deep obligations to you and Lieutenant Currin, and we should be ungrateful indeed if we did not seize upon such an opportunity to repay them. I am yours to command. Name anything not incompatible with the safety of the army."

"With your permission, then," said Randolph hurriedly, "Lieutenant Currin and I will go at once. Let a company of rangers follow along the Lorette road to the La Vallière château. Some of the captured Canadians can be made to guide them. For your kindness, I thank you. And, for God's sake, have the rangers hasten!"

Without ceremony he turned, and, with Barnaby at his heels, hurried off toward the northern edge of the plateau.

"Hold a minute, Charles," Barnaby exclaimed, before they had gone far. "We'll need some better weapons than these cheese toasters that ain't good for nothin' but gettin' between your legs an' trippin' you up. I know where some good rifles can be got."

So saying, he led the way to a tree beneath which was piled a varied assortment of weapons that had been picked

up from the field of battle. Disdainfully throwing aside the ordinary fusils, he selected two superb rifles that had evidently belonged to Canadian sharpshooters. Two full powder-horns and two pouches of bullets completed their equipment.

"Now," said the Irishman, shaking his weapon with satisfaction, "I feel at home again. Before that one-eyed devil gits Miss Saint-Pierre there 'll be some doin's! Lead on, Charles."

Randolph did not dare enter the road near the city, for he judged that it was probably still guarded by parties of the enemy. Instead, he determined to follow as nearly as might be the route he had taken the night of his escape to the fleet. He led the way down the edge of the plateau, passed through the line of pickets, and plunged into the woods. They had not gone far when Barnaby plucked his companion by the sleeve.

"Ain't that a man?" he whispered, pointing to a form that lay prostrate in a starlit glade.

They were too close to retreat unperceived. With weapons at the ready, they crept to the edge of the glade. The figure did not move. After watching it for a few moments, Randolph stepped forward and touched it.

"He will give us no trouble, poor fellow!" he said. "T is some Canadian, mortally stricken, who crawled here to die."

Leaving the dead man staring with glassy eyes up toward the stars, they hastened on. Their feet rustled among the fallen autumn leaves, and once a covey of ruffed grouse rose with a great whirring of wings out of a clump of firs through which they were hurrying. From the direction of the St. Charles came confused sounds as of many men on the march, for, though they knew it not, the French army, seized by panic, was deserting the Beauport lines and leaving Quebec to its fate.

"Do you think we shall be in time?" gasped Barnaby, hard put to it to keep up.

"We must! we must!" said Randolph fiercely. "Hurry!"

Impatient as they were, it seemed an age before they at last emerged from the forest upon the road. They had hardly entered it when a sharp challenge rang out in front of them.

"Back to the woods!" whispered Randolph.

Turning about, they dashed with lowered heads back into the cover of the trees. A dozen guns roared after them; as many bullets sang spitefully over their heads to bury themselves in the tree trunks. But, untouched, the Virginians plunged onward, and soon distanced pursuit. Bearing westward, they presently entered the road again, and this time found it unoccupied. Progress now was more rapid; and, running at full speed, they drew near the scattered cabins of the seigniory. All were in darkness. They passed the cabins unobserved; they passed the stone mill; they approached the château. Were they in time? It was not yet midnight; but perhaps Reparti, in his impatience, had come earlier. Randolph felt sick with dread.

Presently they reached a point from which they commanded a view of the front of the château. A light shone from one of the lower windows. Creeping up to the window, Randolph peered in. And, to his infinite relief, he saw Alfrede, Toinette, and old Jeanne. He rapped on the door. It was opened. In a moment more he was in the room with Alfrede in his arms.

As she lifted her face to his, he saw that she had been weeping.

"Oh," she cried, "is it true there has been a battle? That the English are victorious? That Montcalm is dying?"

"It is all true, sweetheart," he said sadly. "Your friend and mine has fallen."

As he said the words, he saw the anxious look on Toinette's face.

"Lieutenant Lusignan was slightly wounded and was captured while fighting desperately," said he. "He is in no danger."

"Captain Randolph saved your beau's life, miss," said Barnaby, seeing at a glance how matters stood and being anxious that his friend should lose none of the credit due him.

"Nonsense, Barnaby!" said Randolph. "One good turn deserves another, mademoiselle. As for good Gerard," he continued, turning to Jeanne, "his battalion was not engaged, so he is safe."

"How do you come here?" asked Alfrede, for the first time making a feeble effort to free herself from his embrace.

"To save you from great danger. Captain Reparti and a score of savages are to be here at midnight to carry you off."

The women's faces paled.

"Not an instant is to be lost. A company of rangers is to follow us, but it will be some time before they can arrive. It would be hopeless to try to run away; the savages would track us down like hounds. We will take refuge in the mill and beat them off till help arrives. You must come at once."

Catching up a cloak that lay on a couch near by, he wrapped it about Alfrede and led her out of the château. The others followed. The distance to the mill was short, but it seemed to all that a long time elapsed before they covered it. More than once black shadows that seemed to move like the forms of stealthy savages set even Barnaby's heart to thumping wildly against his ribs. But at last they reached the mill in safety. Toinette opened the great oaken door; they stepped inside.

"At least we are where we can defend ourselves," said Randolph, in a tone of vast relief.

While Barnaby was inspecting their fortress, Randolph said to the women: "Are there no men on the seigniory whom we could trust?"

"Some returned this afternoon bringing news of the battle," said Toinette. "But such was their terror of the English that the village is now practically deserted. Only three *censitaires* remain: Pierre Michaud, who is the oldest man on the seigniory; Henri Du Some, who is just recovering from a wound; and Jacques Marmette, the fat lazy fellow who tried last autumn to evade paying his *cens et rente*. I would not trust him, but I would the others. Pierre would perhaps be of little assistance because he is so old, but Henri doubtless would be. His mother, Suzanne, is forever telling about the sovereign you gave her. I feel sure that in such a cause Henri would serve under you."

"I will go and rouse them," volunteered Jeanne. "Reparti would not be likely to harm me."

She unbarred the door and went out. When she was gone, Randolph and the two girls joined Barnaby in surveying the mill and in blocking up some windows in the lower story. By the time this work was completed, Jeanne returned, bringing with her Pierre, Henri, and old Suzanne. Both *censitaires* carried guns.

"We will do what we can to help you, m'sieu'," said Pierre to Randolph. "Even in old France the Michauds were loyal to the family of La Vallière as against all other authority. Twice have I stood within this mill and helped to beat off the Iroquois wolves. Though I am an old man, I have strength enough for one more fight."

"Yes, m'sieu'," echoed Henri; "you were kind to my old mother. You are a good man, though a Bostonnais. We will stand by you."

Randolph thanked them and explained his plan of defense. The women were to remain on the ground floor, where they would be out of reach of bullets. Pierre and Henri were also to stay on this floor and be ready to fire out of the loopholes near the door. Randolph and Barnaby were to take their stations on the flat roof, where they would be protected by the battlements and whence they could survey the ground around the mill.

"The plan is well enough," said Barnaby, when Randolph had finished, "but that barn must not be left standing."

As he spoke he pointed to a log structure that stood about one hundred yards down the slope in front of the mill.

"What do you propose?" asked Randolph.

"I 'll hide in the barn. When the Injuns come, I 'll fire it an' scoot back to the mill."

"Why not fire it now?"

"Because we 'll want the light to shoot by. The buildin' might burn down afore they come."

Randolph acquiesced. Barnaby opened the door and slipped out. When he was gone, Randolph climbed to his own station. He had scarcely stepped out on the roof when Alfrede and Toinette appeared at the head of the stairs behind him.

"We want to be up here, too," explained Alfrede, when he began to remonstrate. "At least let us stay till the enemy appear."

Unable to resist such an appeal, he led them to a sheltered corner where they sat down on a ledge of stone. He followed their example, and, after taking possession of one of Alfrede's hands, began his watch.

From their elevated position they commanded a dim view of the château, the village, and the valley that lay below. Through the open door of the barn they caught a glimpse of Barnaby striking a light with flint and steel;

then the door closed, and they saw him no more. The splash of the little stream which furnished power for the mill drowned the fainter noises of the night; but they heard a cock crow in the village, then another and another. Everything seemed peaceful. Surely it was impossible that terrible danger hung imminent.

But presently from one side of the château they heard the fearsome hoot of an owl. An answering hoot came from the side opposite. And, straining their eyes through the gloom, the watchers on the mill saw a procession of stealthy forms, led by one of enormous size and height, glide in single file across an open space toward the château.

Randolph felt the grasp upon his hand tighten.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE STONE MILL

FROM the château resounded the crash of bursting doors, and then a chorus of hideous disappointed yells. Half a dozen dark forms came yelping toward the mill. Looking down at the barn, Randolph saw through a chink in the logs a little burst of flame; but, to his surprise and alarm, Barnaby did not issue from the door. He had almost decided to hurry out to his comrade's assistance when from the barn came the report of a rifle. The foremost warrior fell headlong. Taken unawares and not knowing what enemy they had to contend against, his companions threw themselves flat upon the ground and crept away like so many snakes. Almost instantly the door opened, and Barnaby sprang out and raced toward the mill. As the barn was between him and the savages, he made the passage safely. Inside the door, he turned, and shouted exultantly:

"Come on, ye bloody divils; come on an' be kilt!"

In a minute more he had joined Randolph.

"When I got the rifles, did n't I say there 'd be some doin's?" he exclaimed. "There 's one less of the critters to bother us."

"Did you fire the barn?" asked Randolph.

"Yes, I touched off a lot of hay. Don't you see that little puff of smoke? Nothin' could save the buildin' now."

Randolph turned to Alfrede and Toinette. "Don't you think you had better go below?" he asked.

"Oh, let us stay up here with you!" begged Alfrede. "I feel safer here than down there in the darkness."

Toinette also pleaded to be allowed to remain.

"What do you think about their staying, Barnaby?" asked Randolph doubtfully.

"Let 'em stay," said the Irishman promptly, well knowing that his answer would please all concerned. "If they 'll sit in that corner an' promise not to stand up, I can't see but they 'll be as safe here as anywhere. Besides, if the lower floors should be taken, we 'll be able to hold out a while up here."

"Thank you, Lieutenant Currin," said Alfrede gayly, in spite of the danger that menaced. "Since our first meeting I have always considered you a gentleman of great judgment and discrimination."

There was no time for more such byplay. Attracted by the shot and by their companions' yells, the whole wild crew about the château came whooping toward the mill, their forms dimly discernible through the gloom. Stopping out of effective range, they let fly a fusillade of bullets which pattered harmlessly against the stone walls. The defenders did not deign a reply.

"They 'll be a long time liftin' our scalps at that rate," said Barnaby. "The longer they wait to begin serious diviltry the better for us. That barn 'll throw a prime shootin' light afore long."

Evidently the enemy realized this, for presently they could be heard hacking at the logs on the farther side of the barn as if trying to effect an entrance and extinguish the flames. It was a useless effort. The hay and other provender in the building burned like tinder; little tongues of fire began to dart through the thatch. Soon a great sheaf of flame was shooting high in the air, lighting up the ground in front of the mill almost as if it were day.

Meanwhile the besiegers surrounded the mill, and from the shelter of trees, rocks, and bushes opened another

fusillade. But Randolph and Barnaby sat silently watchful, while Henri and old Pierre were far too experienced to waste a shot when there was no mark at which to aim.

At intervals between the reports there came to the besiegers from higher up the hill behind the mill the sound of chopping. Then a tree fell.

"That means real mischief," whispered Barnaby. "They're makin' a ram to break the door in with."

"I fear you are right," said Randolph. "Can you think of anything we ought to do?"

"Don't the Old Testament say somethin' about a certain woman of Thebes castin' a piece of millstone down on Abimelech's head and breakin' his skull? I'm not strong on the Scriptures, but I'll swear it does. Why not take a leaf out of the book of *Judges*?"

Randolph at once grasped the idea and approved it. Descending the stairs to the first floor, the two found some heavy beams, which they carried to the top and piled along the battlement immediately over the doorway. Anxious to help, Alfrede and Toinette, assisted by Jeanne and even old Suzanne, brought up numerous lighter missiles.

When a considerable supply of such weapons had been accumulated, the work was brought to a halt by the appearance of a dozen warriors bearing the long stem of a slender pine. Just outside of effective rifle range they came to a pause. Then from a little ravine at one side of the mill a voice called:

"*Messieurs les Bostonnais*, we have you in a trap. All that remains is to open the door and take you out. We know there are but two of you besides Henri and Pierre, for I saw you come. Surrender, and you shall be well treated. We number thirty men, and others are coming."

"T is Jacques Marmette," exclaimed Toinette. "The wretch!"

"We do not negotiate with underlings," called Randolph.
"You are wasting breath. Let your leader talk."

"*Nom de Dieu!* you shall hear him," came Reparti's deep voice. "At last, Captain Randolph, I have you."

"There is a fable about catching one's hare, Captain Reparti," shouted Randolph, not unwilling to gain time by parley.

"Never fear, I shall catch the hare — and cook him too!" cried the Frenchman, laughing diabolically. "Already the fire is lighted. Only one thing can save you. Surrender the women, and you shall go free."

"Tell him to go to the devil!" whispered Barnaby.

"You are very modest in your demands," called Randolph sneeringly. "But our answer is: come and take them. This mill has withstood the onslaughts of Iroquois more genuine than those we slew when we rescued Mademoiselle de Saint-Pierre on the Rivière aux Bœufs. Bring on your bloodhounds! Do your utmost! We are ready!"

"Blood of God!" shrieked Reparti, enraged beyond measure by the allusion to how he had been foiled, and by the knowledge that the secret was at last discovered. "You shall wear a necklace of red-hot hatchets. Your eyes shall be burned out with lighted splinters. Le Chat shall use all the refinements of which he is master. *En avant, mes enfants!*"

At his last words the warriors took up their battering ram and moved slowly toward the mill.

"How much do you think the door will stand?" asked Randolph, in a low voice of Barnaby.

"Not much, I'm fearin'. 'T is thick enough, but 't is an old one. If we can help it, they must n't touch it. We must each pick out a man an' get him. That log's heavy; an' if three or four at the front end are laid out, the rest'll have more'n they'll want to stagger under."

"Pierre," called Randolph to the defenders below, "they're coming. You take the foremost. Henri, take the second. You shall each have five hundred francs if you hit your man. If they break in, come up to us."

"*Oui, monsieur le capitaine,* we are ready," came their answer.

"You take the third, Charles. I'll answer at the last day for the fourth," said Barnaby.

"Is there nothing we can do to help?" asked Alfrede anxiously.

"You may pray for us all, if you will, dear," said Randolph tenderly. "But do not feel afraid. We shall beat them back. This is plain sailing compared with last winter in Quebec."

The girls knelt on the hard stone roof. And, amid the whoops of the oncoming savages, their fresh young voices rose to heaven in heartfelt appeal to the God of Battles.

Soon the attacking party were within a hundred yards. Their painted bodies and barbaric ornaments glistened in the firelight. Pointing the butt of the tree full at the door, they dashed forward. Those not engaged in the attempt shouted wildly and fired at the loopholes.

When they were within forty yards, old Pierre's rifle spoke. The foremost warrior staggered to one side and sat down. Almost instantly Henri fired, and the second fell headlong. Randolph and Barnaby were equally successful with the third and fourth. The fifth savage, fearing that his turn would come next, let go his hold and sprang back. As the defenders had hoped, the heavy butt, being no longer supported, fell to the ground. At this, the whole party dropped the log and fled wildly for cover.

"Bravo!" cried Randolph. "Henri and Pierre, you shall have the reward, and as much more for each one you bring down."

"'Twas well done all around — not least of all the prayin'," said Barnaby gallantly, as he primed his rifle. "But one lesson'll not be enough. See that red snake that fell first tryin' to crawl off! Shall I give him another ball?"

"Let him go," said Randolph. "He can harm us no more."

The besiegers now ceased firing and were evidently in consultation. Presently the sound of chopping could be heard again.

"They're cuttin' another ram," said Barnaby. "This time it'll not be so hefty a one."

"The rangers ought to be coming soon," said Randolph.

"They'll be comin' far slower than we did," returned Barnaby. "Miss Saint-Pierre, Charles ran so fast comin' that I pretty nigh busted my lungs tryin' to keep up, an' both sides of the road belonged to me. I'm not certain yet whether it was wantin' to see you or save you that made him in such a rush. I would n't blame him a bit if it was the first — considerin' the warmth of his welcome."

"Lieutenant Currin," said Alfred, "Captain Randolph told me long ago that you were an unmitigated tease. Now I know that he spoke the truth."

Barnaby laughed heartily. "He most always does — when he ain't lyin'," he said. "Charles," he continued, shrewdly anxious to turn the thoughts of the girls from the horrors that surrounded them, "do you be after remimberin' the time you stopped at my cabin an' I reminded you of the girl you kipt twistin' your blessed neck off to see the last of at Fort Le Bœuf?"

"I believe I have some remembrance of the circumstance," Randolph admitted somewhat unwillingly.

"An' do you be after remimberin' me tellin' you to say the word when you wanted to elope an' I'd be the man to help you? Well, the only time you got a chance you re-

fused; an' you've been repentin' in sackcloth an' ashes ever since. But I've helped to rescue the lady twice now. Won't that about square the account?"

"I shall never feel that the account is square, old friend, until we've found your boy," said Randolph warmly.

"Yes, indeed, Lieutenant Currin," cried Alfrede, "we will do all we can. No trouble nor expense shall be spared. I know that we shall find him."

"God bless you both for them kind words!" said Barnaby feelingly. "T is enough to keep one's hope alive when he has such friends. But look yonder!" And he pointed to a party of warriors who had just come in sight bearing another log.

"You were right, Barnaby," said Randolph anxiously. "It is a smaller one, and there are more Indians carrying it. This time we shall have more trouble beating them off."

Thus were the defenders recalled to the stern realities of their situation. The dangers threatening them were even greater than they were aware of. As the warriors came on and the defenders prepared to receive them, some dark forms were wading cautiously under the bank of the swift stream whose current in peaceful times turned the wheel of the mill. They reached a point close under the rear wall and stepped silently from the water upon the bank. Here they were still in the shadow, but there was light enough to reveal their figures with tolerable distinctness and even something of their features. He who had led the way was the *habitant* Jacques Marmette; the giant behind him could be no other than Reparti; the squat, half-naked form that brought up the rear was Le Chat.

No sooner had they put foot upon dry ground than the *habitant* raised a ladder he was carrying against the wall, and, mounting it, came to a small window in the second story which he proceeded cautiously to open. This opera-

tion he performed without noise. Then, creeping in, he beckoned to his companions to follow. This they did. In less time than it takes to tell, all three were inside the mill and were groping their way toward the stairs that led to the top.

But hardly had the sachem's moccasins disappeared through the window when a lithe form such as belongs to a well-developed boy of ten years glided from behind the bank and mounted the ladder with the lightness and rapidity of a cat. He, in turn, had scarcely disappeared when yet another figure, attired in the garb of an Indian woman, likewise crept up the ladder and through the window into the mill.

As Reparti and his companions reached the stairway, the savages bearing the battering-ram dashed toward the door. The defenders fired as before. Cries of rage and anguish told that the bullets had not been sped in vain, but a violent blow delivered a moment later against the door showed that this time the besiegers had struck home. Hurriedly yet quietly the three men who had entered through the window mounted the stairs and stepped out upon the roof. Randolph and Barnaby were so intent upon hurling down missiles upon the heads of the raging mob gathered before the door that they did not dream of danger in their rear. Drawing their weapons, Reparti and Le Chat had begun to steal forward, when from the head of the stairs a boyish voice exclaimed:

“Father, look behind you!”

Barnaby and Randolph whirled at the sound. Alfrede and Toinette, catching sight of the apparitions, screamed.

“My boy!” cried the Irishman. “My little Barnaby!”

At last the conflict which the Virginians so long had hoped for was come. Before them stood their enemies. And life and more than life hung in the issue.

"At last I have you, you devil!" roared Barnaby, springing with clubbed rifle at Le Chat.

At the approach of danger, Jacques stepped back toward the stairway. Quick as thought the boy gave him a push which sent him tumbling backward to the floor below, where he lay groaning.

Almost at the same instant Barnaby struck a heavy blow at Le Chat. The sachem partly evaded it and partly caught it on uplifted tomahawk. Then he glided toward his opponent and struck with the knife in his left hand. The blow went home. Barnaby dropped his rifle. The sachem uttered a whoop of triumph. But he little knew the man with whom he had to deal. The memory of past wrongs, the sweet joy of knowing that his son still lived, combined to give the borderer superhuman strength and vitality. Before the blow could be repeated he closed with his antagonist. For some moments they wrestled fiercely. Then the white man with resistless power raised the sachem in his arms, and staggering to the front of the mill, with a mighty heave threw him as he might a child over the battlement, to fall crushed and bleeding on the rocks fifty feet below.

Meanwhile another conflict equally venomous had begun. Drawing his sword at the first sight of his enemy, Randolph sprang forward to meet him.

"I have long promised myself the pleasure of sending you to hell!" he cried as he parried a vicious thrust. "I will finish the work that Captain Van Braam begun."

"We shall see," hissed Reparti, redoubling his efforts.

The two were equally matched. Reparti was the stronger; but Randolph was fully his equal as a swordsman, and was besides exalted by a determination that rendered him unusually formidable. Steel rasped against steel, but neither combatant gained any advantage. The

raging flames without gave ample light and made it possible for each man to read his antagonist's attack. Alfrede and Toinette stood watching in horror-stricken silence.

The conflict was still undecided when Barnaby disposed of the sachem. Though bleeding freely from his wound, the Irishman caught up his rifle once more and advanced upon the Frenchman.

"Stand back!" cried Randolph angrily. "I have sworn to kill him myself."

But Barnaby, regarding the Frenchman as he would a snake and having wrongs of his own to avenge, had no mind to allow Randolph to endanger his life out of a mistaken sense of chivalry and honor. He disobeyed the order, and, with uplifted weapon, drew nearer. Keenly aware of this new danger, Reparti, still facing Randolph, retreated toward the stairs, closely pressed by both his foes.

But it was ordained that neither of the Virginians should slay the man who had so bitterly wronged them. Reparti's retreat unconsciously brought him nearer to a form that had just appeared up the stairs. The form sprang forward; a knife flashed in the light of the flames, and sheathed itself to the hilt in the Frenchman's broad back. Reparti turned and recognized his new assailant.

"Sàki!" he gasped, then tottered backward to the floor.

Instantly the girl's ferocity seemed to disappear. Kneeling beside the body, she feverishly placed her hand over the heart. No fluttering throb met her touch.

"He is dead," said Cutrin solemnly. "His sin has found him out."

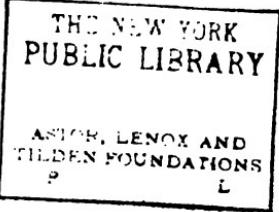
With a bitter sob the girl passionately kissed the paling face. Then, springing to her feet, she ran to the battlement and mounted it.

"Sàki has no more to live for now!" she cried.



"Kneeling beside the body, she feverishly placed her hand over the heart."

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Again the knife rose and fell. In a moment her body followed that of the sachem to the rocks below.

Meanwhile the warriors without had been dealing thunderous blows against the door, which, ponderous but worm-eaten, was at last splintering beneath the repeated shocks. But as the demoniac yells grew more triumphant, there came from beyond the flames a volley of shots, followed by New England cheers.

CHAPTER XXXVII

EASTOVER

FAR to the southward from the Rock of Quebec runs a broad and shining river called the Potomac, on whose fertile banks in colonial days rose the mansions of a race of gentlemen whose lives and deeds are known wherever history is read or civilized language spoken. To one of these mansions we must now transport ourselves. It was a spacious structure, with wide extending wings; and it crowned the top of a park-like hill that stretched with gradual ascent up from the river. On one side were numerous stables and tobacco sheds; on the other, a village of white-washed cabins where red-turbaned mammies crooned and pickaninnies capered in the sunshine. Beyond lay broad fields, meadows, pastures, and forests on whose branches still clung the crimson leaves of autumn.

At the foot of the hill stood a wharf piled high with huge casks of tobacco awaiting the annual London ship that would bring the varied goods ordered months before through the English factor and would carry away the great staple. At the end of the wharf sat a small, barefooted negro boy, whose rude pole and line proclaimed that he was an humble disciple of the gentle Izaak. While waiting for the fish to bite he basked lazily in the afternoon sunlight, watching the antics of some wild ducks and great white swans far out in the stream, and singing over and over to himself:

“Juba dis an’ Juba dat,
An’ Juba roun’ de kittle o’ fat,
Juba heah, an’ Juba dah,
An’ Juba, Juba ebry whah.”

"You boy!" The speaker was a white man who had ridden up the river road and had just drawn rein beside the wharf.

"Yes, suh!" answered the boy, springing up and hurrying toward the horseman.

"What's yer name?"

"Alexander, suh."

"Do you belong to Captain Randolph?"

"Yes, suh."

The horseman fumbled in his ragged coat and drew out a couple of letters. "Well, I reckon you may tote these hyer up to the Hall an' save me the trouble. They wuz give to me down to Quantico Crick 'bout ten this mawnin', an' I wuz told as how I wuz to leave 'em hyer. Your master'll be up the river soon as the tide turns. He has a mighty purty gal along with 'im who they say's your new missus. Lieutenant Currin's with 'em. He give me the letters. He got hurt fittin' the Frenchers an' still looks kinder pale like. Said he'd 've rid over hisself if he'd been able."

Alexander took the letters, whereupon the horseman turned, and, clapping spurs to his mount, rapidly disappeared down the road. The boy looked first at one and then at the other of the missives, much as a monkey might have done, after which scrutiny he walked out on the wharf to secure his pole and string of fish. While he was doing the latter, one of the letters slipped from his grasp into the water, floated a little way, then slowly sank out of sight.

"Now I'se gwine ketch it!" he exclaimed ruefully.

For some minutes he reflected upon the gravity of his situation. Then his face relaxed, and he said: "Huh, dey don' know I got two!"

With this comforting thought he picked up his pole and fish and climbed the hill toward the Hall.

"You Alexander! whah yo' been to now?" demanded a grizzled old negro in livery of blue, when the boy presented himself at a rear door.

"I'se been fishin', pappy," said the boy, grinning cavernously.

"Law, chile, why you did done ketch a string of big ones!" exclaimed the old man, lifting the fish and looking at them with his head cocked to one side.

"Whah's Mis' Currin?"

"Wha' you done want wid Mis' Currin, chile?"

"A man done gib me a letteh foh her."

"Did you say that you have a letter for me, Alexander?" asked an eager voice, and a lady came hurrying out on the porch on which father and son stood. A little older and much sadder, she was still as beautiful as when first we met her in the cabin in the valley of the Shenandoah. After her stalked a great silky-eared hound, whose dimming eyes bore evidence to the ravages of age. Along his side ran a long line bare of hair — the trace of an ancient and terrible wound.

"Yes, missus," replied the boy, "a man done gib me dis. He say as how Mistah Currin gib it to him down to Quantico Crick. He said massa wuz along wid a party gal who wuz to be the new missus."

"But this letter is not for me, Alexander," said Ellen disappointedly. "It is directed to Colonel Washington."

"He said it wuz foh you," averred the boy.

"That is strange. He must have had another and lost it."

"Jist like a triflin' pore white!" ejaculated the old negro scornfully.

"What else did the man say, Alexander?"

"He said massa'd be up de ribber when de tide done turn."

"Did he say anything about any one else being on the boat?" asked Ellen, with an effort.

"Nary a word, missus."

Ellen sighed, and the old negro looked disappointed. Then she said: "Philip, send some boy over to Mount Vernon with this. We must do our best to give your master and mistress a cheerful homecoming."

Philip departed with the letter toward the stables, where he directed the first stable-boy he met to saddle a horse. When the animal was led out, however, the old man mounted it himself and galloped off down the driveway.

"Dis boy has reasons fer wantin' carry dat letter himself," he chuckled, as he swung into the main highway. "He's done got a' ijear."

Half an hour's ride brought him in sight of another mansion standing likewise at the brow of a gentle wooded slope which ended, however, at a precipitous river bank, whose summit was many feet above the level of the stream and commanded a noble prospect of water, cliffs, woods, and plantations. The house itself was two stories high, with a long porch in front and a chimney at each end. As Philip drew near, a tall horseman, who had just dismounted, was caressing a number of foxhounds that had gathered affectionately round him.

"Take the mare to the stable, Bishop," he was saying to a groom in scarlet livery. "Down, Sweetlips, down!" he continued to the most demonstrative of the hounds. "Why, how do you do, Philip!" he exclaimed, perceiving the new comer. "Any news from your master?"

"He's down de ribber at Quantico Creek, an' he' comin' up when de tide turn," said Philip eagerly. "He's done got a beautiful new missus with him, an' Lieutenant Currin's along. I've got a letteh heah foh you from massa."

"Why, that's glorious!" exclaimed Washington, for it

was indeed he. "Glorious! The best news I've heard for months!"

"We's gwine gib 'em a big home-comin', Colonel Washington," continued the old negro. "I'se sure Massa Randolph'll not feel's though it wuz complete 'less you come over."

"Thank you, Philip, we'll certainly come!"

"Dey's anotheh t'ing," continued the negro, somewhat doubtfully.

"What is it Philip?"

"I'se done been t'inkin', Colonel Washington, dat it would be a scrumptious fine t'ing if you could kinder prevail on Mis' Currin's folks to come, too. It's gwine be a mighty disappointment to her, Colonel Washington, for dem to kem home 'thout that boy. She's been a-honin' for the leetle feller — I could see it. Yes, suh, it'll be a big disappointment. She's been a-hopin'. An' if you could sorter just force 'em to kem over, it'd kinder take some o' the aidge off, mebbe. 'T's jist pride, nothin' but pride, holds 'em back, Colonel Washington. Dey hain't got no otheh chilluns but Ellen, an' dey'd be a heap happier all roun' if dey'd git reconcile'. You could do it."

"Your wishes do you honor, Philip," said Washington gravely. "We'll see what can be done."

After a few more words the negro rode off down the drive. Washington mounted the steps, crossed the wide veranda, and entered the house.

"Who was the messenger, George?" asked a gentle voice.

The speaker was a lady somewhat below the middle size but plump and well formed, with dark eyes expressive of kindly good nature, and a handsome face in which beamed intelligence — a face which, when grown older, is, of all feminine faces, the one most familiar to Americans.

"T was Captain Randolph's Philip, Patsy," said he, as

he put one arm round the lady and kissed her. "He brought a letter from the captain, who is expected home this afternoon."

"Have you read the letter yet?"

"No, but I'll read it aloud," said he. Forthwith he broke the seal and read:

"DEAR GEORGE,—I am sending this by Messenger from Quantico Creek to let you know that we expect to reach Eastover about five this Afternoon. By this time you know, of course, of our great Victory at Quebec and of the Death of those noble Heroes Wolfe and Montcalm. The Night after the battle the cowardly Vaudreuil and Bigot with the Remnants of the routed Army fled from the city, which opened its Gates to us five Days later. Another short Campaign, and all Canada is inevitably ours. Thus will end the great War which WE began on the Slopes of Laurel Hill. Captain Van Braam and Lieutenant Currin are with me—and we have the BOY! Also there is another Person whom you have met before. I will not say more save that another Fairfax Plantation *does* have a new Mistress. How it all came about, I will tell you later. Of course, you must come over to meet us—you and Mrs. Washington. Could n't you in some Way induce the Carys to accompany you? It would be the one thing necessary to make all complete. Surely they could be brought round now. Barnaby is a splendid Fellow. Even the Carys of Virginia need not apologize for a Son-in-Law who has *served on the staff of Wolfe and has been complimented by General Townshend*. If you can do it, you will greatly oblige me, and, I am sure, will make all happy. With best Regards to you both, I am

"Your affectionate Friend,

"CHARLES RANDOLPH."

"What a strange coincidence!" Washington exclaimed "Philip asked me to try to do the same thing. But he did n't know they had found the boy!"

"How happy Ellen will be to have him again!" cried Mrs. Washington, and her eyes were wet with sympathetic tears. "Oh, George, can't we prevail upon the Carys to go and make all perfect? In some way we must do it!"

The colonel smiled fondly down into the eager face, and his own voice was not too steady as he said: "Yes, Patsy, I think for once we may well break a good rule and meddle in an affair that is not our own."

Half an hour later an elegant new chariot, emblazoned with the Washington arms and attended by black outriders in gray suits, scarlet waistcoats, and silver-laced hats, drew up before the mansion. Mrs. Washington, handsomely gowned, was gallantly handed in by the colonel, whose costume now included a fashionable gold-laced hat and a sword with a brilliant gold and scarlet sword-knot. The colonel then mounted a superb black horse that was being held in waiting by a groom; the outriders took their places; and the equipage was off.

A short drive along a pleasant woodland road brought them in sight of another mansion, which in size and appointments was in no way inferior to those already described. By Washington's direction the chariot stopped before it. He dismounted, and, handing his rein to one of the outriders, climbed the steps of the pillared portico and swung the great brass knocker. Soon he was ushered by a black serving-man into a spacious drawing-room, from whose wainscoted walls the impassive faces of worthies in courtly garb looked down upon him. Presently a tall and proud-looking gentleman and a beautiful gentlewoman, both in middle age, entered.

"Major and Mrs. Cary," said Washington, when the first greetings were over, "I have come on a somewhat strange errand. I beg that however you may receive what I am about to say, you will at least believe that it proceeds

from an honest desire to further the happiness of you and others of my dear friends."

"I have not the slightest doubt in the world, not the slightest, my dear colonel," said the major heartily.

"Well, then, I may proceed; and yet I hardly know how to begin. Perhaps I may as well say first that Captain Randolph is to arrive home this evening bringing a wife."

"Lal your good example is proving contagious, it seems," laughed Mrs. Cary. "Who is the bride?"

"Of that I am not sure, but I think she is the daughter of Captain de Saint-Pierre, of whom, I believe, I have told you. Captain Randolph is also accompanied by Lieutenant Currin, your son-in-law, and his son, your grandson, whom in some way they have happily contrived to rescue."

As he said the last, the speaker keenly watched the two faces before him. Major Cary's countenance was inscrutable, but the colonel fancied that a look of joy flashed into Mrs. Cary's eyes.

"Well, what of that?" said the major, a trifle stiffly.

"I wanted you to go with me to receive them," said Washington earnestly. "Captain Randolph has asked me to do it. Even Philip pleaded that I should."

"Confound that old nigger!" said the major sharply.

"Captain Randolph says it is the one thing needed to make the home-coming perfect. I understand how you have felt in this matter. But the time has passed for that. Lieutenant Currin has proved himself a man on many occasions. I do not hesitate to say that in my regiment there was no officer, not even Captain Randolph, whose opinion I valued more highly or who did more for our cause. At Quebec he has greatly distinguished himself and even served on the staff of Wolfe. Furthermore, I understand, from a letter I have just received from Lord Fairfax at Winchester, that it is the intention of the people

in the Shenandoah region to elect Currin to fill a vacancy in the burgesses and that he will have no opposition. So you see there is really no reason why you should not forget the past. If Lieutenant Currin had proved a worthless fellow, you might well continue to refuse to recognize him; but his good sense, firmness, and gallantry have raised him to a position which most men in all Virginia might well envy. Come, old friends, Mrs. Washington is waiting outside in the chariot. You shall ride with her. You simply must go!"

Into Mrs. Cary's face had come an eager look which there was no mistaking.

"Richard," she said gently, "Richard, let us go."

"Well, if we must, I suppose we must," said Richard resignedly. "There's no resisting a soldier like Colonel Washington."

Mrs. Cary ran to get her wraps and hat with almost the agility of a girl, while even the major displayed wonderful spryness for one so chronically afflicted with the gout.

"Colonel Washington," she said, when she came back, "Ellen had many admirers; but I have noticed that all the rest have shown far greater proficiency in guzzling wine, horse-racing, and cock-fighting than in facing the enemies of their country. Any man who could fight as Lieutenant Currin did when he rescued Ellen is good enough for my son-in-law."

"He did do well, for a fact," admitted the major. "Gad, I don't know that I could have done any better myself! Let me see, it was three Indians he killed, was n't it?"

"Three in the boat and one in the pursuit, to be exact," said Washington, with an inward smile.

"I never heard of anything to equal it!" declared Mrs. Cary, and there were tears in her eyes. "Colonel Wash-

ington, ever since my grandson was carried off, I've wanted to go to Ellen, and I think Richard has, too."

"How do you know?" said Richard enigmatically.

When an hour later the Mount Vernon chariot drew near Eastover, its occupants saw a motley assemblage, chiefly composed of negroes of all sizes, ages, and sexes, gathered on and about the wharf, gazing expectantly down the river at a white sail a quarter of a mile below. As the chariot came to a standstill, Ellen, who was at the end of the wharf, saw and recognized both it and the horseman beside it and hurried to greet the newcomers. Just then the chariot door opened, and Mrs. Washington and Major and Mrs. Cary descended.

"Mother! father!" cried Ellen, and kissed them both. The two women clung to each other weeping, while the great hound wagged his tail and whimpered sympathetically. Even the major might not have been able to contain himself had he not perceived Philip looking on with features in which self-satisfaction and joy were curiously commingled. Stepping up to the old servant, the major surreptitiously slipped into his not too reluctant palm a gold sovereign.

Meanwhile, aided by both wind and tide, the boat had been rapidly approaching. Its spreading sails shone white against the darkening water, while beyond rose the clustered Maryland hills whose golden canopy was glorified by the descending sun. No more peaceful scene could have been selected for a home-coming.

Soon the negroes began to exclaim: "I sees Marse Charlie! Kin you see Marse Charlie?"

Their eyes had not played them false. Near the bow stood Randolph, dressed as usual, in the blue and scarlet uniform of a captain of Royal Americans, and beside him a slender figure which Washington had last seen sil-

houetted against a pink morning sky, crying "*Bon voyage!*" Close by stood a short, stocky man, with a bullet-shaped head, large nose, and mustachios trimmed in the military fashion; also a well-knit figure, broad of shoulders and handsome and frank of face; while beside him, almost concealed from view by the vessel's side, was a slighter form which bade fair in time to be the replica of the father.

Steered by a deft hand, the boat drew in to the landing amid vociferous shouts of: "Welcome home, Marse Charlie! We sho' is glad to see you an' the pretty missus, Marse Charlie!" in which young Alexander joined with the loudest.

As the boat touched the wharf, Ellen, with her mother and father, was making her way through the press toward it when a light form bounded down the side, and with a cry of "Mother!" flung itself into her arms. The hound sniffed eagerly at the lad's limbs, and then, capering madly about, filled the air with joyful bays. Long the mother hugged her son to her as if fearing to let him go. Then, turning, she said:

"Mother, father, this is the little boy I lost!"

And Captain Van Braam was not the only one in whose eyes there were tears.

THE END

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